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HISTORY OF 2/8TH BATTALION
SHERWOOD FORESTERS 1914—1918



COLONEL AND MASCOT.



THE SHERWOOD FORESTERS
IN THE GREAT WAR
1914—1918.

THE 2/8TH BATTALION

BY

LIEUT.-COLONEL W. C. OATES, D.S.O.

NOTTINGHAM
J. & H. BELL LIMITED
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PREFACE

IN writing this History of the gallant deeds of my comrades, I have endeavoured to temper tragedy with comedy, and to weave among the sorrows of War all those little intimate happenings, the memory of which are the salt of Regimental Life. By so doing I hope to make this Book more readable, not only to those who have served with the Battalion, but to the General Public by whose verdict it must stand or fall.

My main objects, however, in writing this preface are to give myself the opportunity of thanking those Officers who have written Chapters in this book, or have given me invaluable help in many matters with which they were more conversant than I. Without their assistance this Book could not have been written. Also to express my deep appreciation of the loyal devotion—I can call it by no other name—which all Ranks gave ungrudgingly to the Battalion and myself.

Lastly I wish to offer my grateful homage to the memory of those brave souls who served with me and have fought their last fight.

W. COAPE OATES.

FOREWORD

BY BRIGADIER-GENERAL E. W. S. K. MACONCHY,
C.B., C.M.G., C.I.E., D.S.O.

COLONEL COAPE OATES has done me the honour of asking me to write a foreword for his History of the "2/8th Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters," one of the Battalions comprising the 178th (Sherwood Foresters) Brigade, which I commanded for nearly two years during their training at home and in Ireland, and finally on service in France in the Spring of 1917.

When I assumed command Colonel Coape Oates was the only "regular" Officer in the Brigade, all the others being Territorials, and yet the training of the Battalions was in a condition which spoke volumes for the keenness and devotion to their work which must have been shewn by Officers and all ranks of the Territorials before the War. Colonel Oates had raised and trained the 2/8th with that indefatigable spirit and energy which characterises him, and had produced a splendid Battalion by the Summer of 1915, but I think he will admit that he found before long that he had serious rivals in the "civilian" Soldiers of the other Battalions.

I am glad to have this opportunity of adding my humble quota of admiration, and appreciation of the Territorial Force and its organisation as well as of the gallant and devoted service they performed for their Country.

The 2/8th showed a splendid spirit from the start, and maintained it throughout the whole of their service.

Before going to France they shewed, in the Irish Rebellion, what "stuff" they were made of. The 2/7th had had several hours of severe street fighting most gallantly carried out, and their ranks had been thinned by many casualties amongst both Officers and men, when I brought up the 2/8th and called on them to take the final objective by assault. Led by their Colonel, they went forward with a spirit and dash that shewed they were fit to take their place beside the finest troops in the Army.

Both Officers and men shewed an *elan* which promised a future of gallant deeds when put to the test in France, which promise was nobly fulfilled, and it will be with the greatest interest that I shall read Colonel Oates' account of the career of the Battalion after I left the Brigade.

My thanks are due to the Commanding Officer, the Officers, and all ranks for the loyal service they rendered to me, and I greet them once more as comrades and friends. It was an honour I feel deeply to have commanded such a splendid body of men as the 2/8th, and the other gallant Battalions of the Sherwood Foresters, who so gloriously upheld the honour of their Country and King.

Many, alas, have fallen, and I salute the proud memory of those noble lives given in a noble cause.

E. W. S. K. MACONCHY,

BRIG. GENERAL,

Late Commanding 178th (Sherwood Forester) Brigade.

EDENMORE,

HOOK, HANTS.

15th OCTOBER, 1919.

CONTENTS

PREFACE	5
FOREWORD	7
CHAPTER I.—Newark and Early Days	11
CHAPTER II.—Luton and Dunstable	19
CHAPTER III.—Watford	27
CHAPTER IV.—Dublin	35
CHAPTER V.—Athlone and the Mobile Column	50
CHAPTER VI.—The Curragh and Faltia	65
CHAPTER VII.—Fovant	86
CHAPTER VIII.—France at Last	91
CHAPTER IX.—Vendelles, and After	98
CHAPTER X.—Le Verguier	106
CHAPTER XI.—Hargicourt Quarries	118
CHAPTER XII.—Havrin court and Gouzeaucourt Woods	140
CHAPTER XIII.—Out at Rest	149
CHAPTER XIV.—Ypres	160
CHAPTER XV.—Sport with 2/8th Sherwood Foresters	179
CHAPTER XVI.—Lens	189
CHAPTER XVII.—Cambrai, and After	197
APPRECIATION	216
HONOURS AND AWARDS.. .. .	223
ROLL OF HONOUR	225

HISTORY OF 2/8th BATTALION SHERWOOD FORESTERS 1914—1918

CHAPTER I.

NEWARK AND EARLY DAYS.

Formation of the Battalion. Upon the outbreak of War many of our Territorial Units were in Camp, and this was the case with the 8th Sherwood Foresters, whose Headquarters were at Newark. It was obvious to everyone that the full resources of Great Britain must be called into play with the least possible delay if we were to emerge successful from the gigantic struggle before us.

In a very short time the best Territorial Units were earmarked for service abroad, and it was evident that 2nd line units must be formed with all possible speed to feed and keep these Battalions up to strength. The 8th Battalion had marched to Derby for Mobilization, and were then moved to Harpenden for training.

Their first necessity was to weed out all unfit War-rant Officers, N.C.O.'s and men, and it was on Sept. 5th, 1914, that the first party consisting of 4 Officers and 140 N.C.O.'s and men left Harpenden for Newark. This party was commanded by Captain, afterwards Major L. C. B. Appleby, who had under him Captain, afterwards Major A. C. Clarke, Lieutenant R. W. Smith and 2nd Lieutenant J. W. Turner.

This party was meant as a nucleus upon which to form the 2nd 8th, or as it was first called the 8th Reserve Battalion Sherwood Foresters, and the Battalion may be considered to have come into existence on the above-mentioned date.

Shortly afterwards this party was moved to Dunstable where Divisional details were concentrated under Colonel Fearon.

Captain Appleby remained behind at Newark to assist Colonel Foljambe, V.D., in the arduous duties of recruiting; Captain Clarke returned to Harpenden, and Lieutenants Smith and Turner proceeded with the party to Dunstable. Later on Captain J. P. Becher and Lieutenant J. K. Lane took charge of the party until about the middle of October, when Major Appleby assumed command.

Meanwhile Recruits were coming in rapidly at Newark, and these were being trained by Captain Appleby, Captain J. B. Hooley, Lieutenant A. H. Quibell and 2nd Lieutenants R. E. Hemingway and E. F. S. Handford. The Battalion was fortunate in having the assistance of Sergt.-Instructor Benford and Police Constable J. Lacey. Both became Regimental Sergeants-Major, and the latter, being an old Grenadier Guardsman, rendered invaluable service to the Battalion. Further help in this direction was forthcoming as both Police Constable Brunt and Mr. Thurlbý, old regular N.C.O.'s, were enlisted shortly afterwards, and these four formed a useful nucleus for instilling discipline into the newly joined recruits. By the middle of September a strong draft was sent to Harpenden to replace the unfit men who had recently left the 1st Battalion.

Appointment of a C.O. On September 14th Lieutenant Colonel W. Coape Oates was gazetted to the

Command of the newly formed Battalion, and as he was well-known locally and had seen a good deal of Active Service with the 1st and 2nd Royal Munster Fusiliers, he was warmly welcomed by all ranks. Route marching, squad drill and physical training comprised the daily work of the men, and it had to

be carried out in civilian attire for a considerable time. though, thanks to the energy of the Notts. Territorial Force Association, the Battalion was very well served in the matter of clothing as time went on. The men were all in Billets, and this constituted a serious handicap. Discipline under such circumstances always suffers, and much time is wasted by the Company Officers in paying landladies. During the early days a sort of Mothers' Meeting used to be held for this purpose, but the babel of sound which issued on such occasions from the room used soon resulted in the ladies being paid at home.

Plenty of good ground was available for training purposes, as Mrs. T. O. Quibell very kindly lent the Grove to the Battalion during their stay in Newark, and a better place for Battalion Drill, Drill Outposts and Elementary Exercises could not be found, and there is no doubt that the smartness on parade and the steadiness of the men generally was mainly due to the work done here. The N.C.O.'s used to assure the writer that the men looked forward to the daily 2 p.m. Commanding Officer's parade, although they evidently took a certain amount of waking up after the very good fare provided for them in their Billets.

Mr. W. B. T. Pratt was also good enough to lend the Sparrow Lane Football Ground, and this proved most useful for early morning parades, and on wet days, when it was inadvisable to go far afield.

On October 22nd the Commanding Officer visited Dunstable and inspected the Detachment there, and found, as he expected, that a number of the old N.C.O.'s were past their work. He decided to form that Detachment into a separate Company, as many of the men were in rather an unsettled state at being obliged to leave their old Battalion, and it was deemed wiser to give them time to settle down, and not to mix them with newly joined recruits.

On his return the C.O. found that Major Aitchison and Lieutenant Woolley had organised a Drum and Fife Band, which, led by Lance-Corporal Cooper, proudly

played the Battalion back from the Grove in the afternoon. In three days its strength had swollen to twelve and it was obviously going to be a success. Nor was this all, a comfortable little Officers' Mess had been formed at the Royal Oak Hotel, and better still a large consignment of clothing had arrived—the very best help for recruiting purposes.

**March to
Collingham.**

On October 29th the Battalion marched to Collingham by invitation, and had lunch in one of the fields adjoining the main road. They were afterwards given an hour's leave in the village, being put on their honour not to enter a public house. The privilege was not abused, and the march afforded an opportunity for the people outside Newark to judge of the strength and discipline of the newly formed Battalion, and gave a needed change of routine to the men. On October 30th the Officers of the R.E. and 2/8th Sherwood Foresters were most hospitably entertained by the Mayor of Newark, Alderman J. C. Kew, and a very enjoyable evening was spent.

There were now sufficient men to form 4 Companies, but very few N.C.O.'s with any experience of Pay Lists, but a start had to be made some time, and November 1st seemed a good date to begin, so the Commanding Officer gave orders for a commencement to be made, although this meant one Warrant Officer keeping two Pay Lists! The advantages however outweighed the disadvantages, and in a very few days Company feeling and *esprit de corps* became very much in evidence, and this was what was wanted. On November 2nd Captain A. B. Leslie-Melville arrived at Newark from the 1/8th to take over the Adjutancy, and it was very gratifying to see his amazed surprise at the work of the Battalion on parade.

On November 7th a draft of 100 men under 2nd Lieutenant A. Hacking proceeded to Harpenden to join the service Battalion. They were a fine lot of men, and their Officers were very sorry to lose them. Recruits were now coming in well, the Battalion was popular and good clothing was available, a very important point.

In one week in November 170 men were attested, and the standard for a time was raised to 5 feet 7 inches, as the Battalion was nearly up to strength.

Towards the end of the month Field work was started in earnest, and several days were spent at outposts. There is some excellent ground between Balderton and Langford running along the Danethorpe Hills, and Officers and N.C.O.'s all agreed that the instruction they received in Drill and Outposts at Newark laid the foundation for the sound work afterwards done by the Battalion.

By the end of November the Battalion was coming on fast, and was able to execute very creditably a connected outpost scheme, the different companies watching ground from Balderton Hall to the Langford Fleet. Food and hot coffee were taken round to the different outpost companies, and distributed from there.

On December 9th the Commanding Officer was ordered to send in a confidential report as to the state of the Battalion, which was now up to strength as regards other Ranks, but still short of Officers.

The Roll of Officers was as follows:—

Lieut.-Colonel W. Coape Oates, C.O.; Major G. C. Aitchison, 2nd in Command; Major L. C. B. Appleby, Captain A. B. Leslie-Melville, Adjt.; Captains F. G. Cursham, H. P. G. Branston, G. B. Hooley, W. R. Smith, A. H. Quibell, C. F. Ward-Jones.

Subalterns:—Lieutenants T. H. C. Woolley, F. Lawson, R. Staniforth, C. M. Houfton, H. Rye, 2nd Lieutenants H. A. Hewitt, H. Daffen, J. D. Dimock, B. Huntsman, C. Hill, J. Whiston, T. Adams, E. F. Handford, N. Hindley, R. E. Hemingway, C. Cursham, G. G. Elliot, C. P. Elliott, R. V. Harvey.

Acting Quartermaster:—Captain E. R. Hooley.

The Battalion was now in possession of 200 charger loading Rifles and 243 non charger loading, a fact which greatly accelerated training.

Meanwhile the Dunstable Detachment had moved on October 30th to Braintree and Bocking, and they and

other Divisional Details were employed entirely in digging Trenches.

A landing by the enemy in Essex was at that time considered extremely probable, and Engineers of many nationalities succeeded each other in rapid succession, all having different ideas as to the best scheme for a defensive line, but with a touching confidence in the stability of Essex Clay when used for the purpose of making parapets, a confidence not shared by the Essex farmers. Alas the farmers were right, and long before Spring, entrenchments dug with great care and at an infinite expenditure of labour fell in "*en masse*." Owners of property had not yet realised the possible consequences to their estates, and the owner of Panfield Hall on asking some Staff Officers what they were going to do, received the shock of his life on being told that the Hall would probably have to be blown up!

Another move took place shortly, and the 2/8th Detachment were sent to North Weald, the remaining Units going to Ongar. Here the digging became very arduous and monotonous, continuing week after week in bad weather, and often at night. The men had a very hard time, their uniform got into a deplorable state, and it was extremely difficult to get fresh supplies in view of the fact that these men had originally been fully equipped, though in many cases their Clothing had been exchanged, and they had got much the worst of the deal.

On December 30th Capt. J. B. Hooley took over command from Major Appleby and he had under him 2nd Lieutenants Hill, R. E. Hemingway, and E. F. S. Handford.

General's Inspection. The New Year opened with the first inspection of the Battalion, and on Jan. 2nd General Sir Reginald Pole-Carew, K.C.B., accompanied by Colonel Frewin came down to Newark and inspected the Battalion at the Grove. He was received with a General Salute, and then watched some Battalion Drill under the Commanding Officer.

The men were very steady on parade, and favourable comment was made on the fact that when one of the

men fainted, no one moved until ordered to do so, a detail of which the Company Officers were very proud.

The Inspecting Officer in addressing the Battalion in quarter column said:—

“Colonel Oates, Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and men—I just want to tell you how pleased I am to have had the honour of inspecting this Battalion to-day. I also want to say that I am not only pleased, but I am astonished to see what good progress has been made in so short a time. The Drill that I have seen this morning I consider reflects very great credit on all ranks, and I am convinced that if you continue to improve, as you have begun, in a very short time you will be able to hold your own against any Battalion in England.” High praise indeed from an old Guardsman!

The General strongly criticised the instructions to carry on with the old Drill Book and to work on the 8 company system, pointing out that the purpose for which the Battalion was formed was to feed the first line, and that men going from the Reserve to the 1/8th Battalion would have to relearn their Drill. Why these orders were sent it is impossible to understand, as hardly had the men learnt the old drill than an order came through instructing the Battalion to work on the 1914 Infantry Drill Book, and to form 4 companies instead of 8. This caused a great deal of heart burning amongst both Officers and men, as even in this short time there was a strong Company *esprit de corps*, and this had to be broken up.

On January 21st Colonel Wright Bemrose, V.D., the newly appointed Brigadier came to see the Battalion informally, and had lunch with the Officers.

Move to Soon after this orders came for the Battalion
Luton. to move to Luton, where the 2nd North
 Midland Division was to concentrate, and
 on January 30th an advanced party under Major Aitchison proceeded to the new station, and very cleverly succeeded in convincing the Staff that the Battalion

which arrived first should be served best, and as a result got the best billets in the town, situated in the Dallow Road. The Battalion followed on Feb. 1st in beautiful weather. The move reflected the greatest credit on all ranks. The Transport Officer, Lieutenant Dimock, ran his department without a hitch, the men were all present and sober, and the train moved out of Newark station, whither a large crowd had collected to say good-bye, 7 minutes in front of time. Very grateful did the Battalion feel towards the townspeople of Newark. All grades of Society had done their utmost to make Officers and men happy, and never again were the men to get such excellent billets or be so well fed.

Everyone felt that they were leaving home at last.

CHAPTER II.

LUTON AND DUNSTABLE.

There was not unnaturally a good deal of chaos in the arrangements next day. No rations arrived for the men although indented for in plenty of time, and they got no meal before mid-day. Little difficulties too arose about implements for cutting up the meat, none being supplied, but Officers looked after their men well and speedily got things straight. Our chief difficulty was constant complaints about the shortness of the rations, and a large portion of the C.O.'s time was spent in insisting on getting things put right. The representatives of the Battalions were expected to take their rations away, without seeing them weighed, and were forced to accept the weight on the ticket as correct, a system which was most unsatisfactory.

The two Battalions attend Divine Service. On February 5th the Drums and Fifes had the pleasure of playing the 1/8th Battalion from the station to their billets—the Detachment of 400 men under Major Fowler having come to Luton to complete their musketry—and both Battalions attended Divine Service at the same Church, and at the same hour the following Sunday.

Officers were now joining fast—Captain M. C. Martyn who had been invalided from France joined the Battalion, and he stayed with it during most of the heavy fighting in France and Ireland, until promoted to take Command of the 2/7th (Robin Hoods). Lieut.

W. N. Wright, afterwards to become Transport Officer, Lieutenant W. Horton Date, our new M.O. with his son, 2nd Lieutenants Moore, Strachan, Simonet, Fisher and H. C. Jeffcock arrived in rapid succession and the Battalion was now at full strength in both Officers and other ranks.

Move to Billericay. On the 8th February the 2nd Line Sherwood Forester Brigade moved to Essex for instruction in digging, the 2/8th going to Billericay. The Billets in the town were bad, and the men much scattered. The weather too was cold, and the work severe and often in very exposed positions. As a result there was a great deal of sickness amongst both Officers and men, due chiefly to Influenza from which every Officer suffered at some time or other except the Commanding Officer and Adjutant, who were most kindly and hospitably entertained at Ramsden Hall by Mr. and Mrs. Bacon, and lived in the lap of luxury during their stay at Billericay.

The Detachment from North Weald had now joined us. They were a good lot of men, and soon settled down in their new Battalion. Moreover they had organised an excellent Company Drum and Fife Band, which quite held its own.

On February 18th another fine draft of 85 men was sent to the 1/8th Battalion, and it was fortunate that they left when they did as German Measles broke out two days later. Indeed at the time sickness was so pronounced amongst Officers and men that the Battalion was unable to find a reinforcement of four Officers required by the Service Battalion.

Return to Luton. On February 24th the instruction in digging having been completed the Battalion returned to its old quarters at Luton.

A few days later a consignment of Japanese Rifles arrived for the use of the Battalion, and the more ex-

perienced N.C.O.'s were in the throes of getting them cleaned and issued, when news came that Sir Ian Hamilton, G.C.B., was to inspect the Division next day. This meant a party sitting up all night, but the work was done some how, and all difficulties were as usual surmounted, as all ranks were evidently determined to get orders carried out however difficult they might be.

The march past was in double fours, and by common consent the Battalion went by very well. This inspection was followed by another next day, when Brigadier General McCall, C.B., the Divisional Commander, inspected the Battalion. As the men had to parade in old equipment, which was rapidly falling to pieces, the turn out was not impressive.

Orders were now issued to the different Units to form an active service Company each, which was to be specially trained and was to be regarded as a first reinforcement for the first line.

These unfortunate Companies were ordered on to the range to fire a certain number of rounds with the Japanese Rifles which had lately arrived. Many of the men had had little or no training in Musketry, and the course was not only a waste of ammunition, but in many cases did permanent harm to the men's shooting. The practise was carried out in a snowstorm, and there was no shelter of any kind for the men who were waiting their turn to fire. It is believed that this enabled some Minister to state in the House of Commons that already 2nd line Units had fired a modified course with the Japanese Rifle.

The usual courses of Elementary Instruction were now in full blast, and it is recorded that on March 15th the Commanding Officer had to call on the services of four different Officers during the day to act as Adjutant. No sooner would an Officer be appointed to fill the vacant post than he would be 'phoned for to attend some Conference or interview some Staff Officer.

Inspection by Major General Codrington. On April 9th a very helpful inspection on Interior Economy took place. The General was extremely pleased with all he saw, and gave several useful bits of advice to the Battalion Staff.

The Battalion had been fortunate in securing the services of the 1/8th Battalion Bandmaster, Mr Dromey, and as they were unable to take their instruments abroad they had most kindly lent them to the 2nd Line Battalion. The privilege was greatly appreciated, and a fine Band was soon formed. Fortunately there were many keen musicians amongst the Officers, notably Captains Woolley and Dimock, and this pair used to keep the C.O. straight from a musical point of view, and coach him beforehand as to his conversation with the Bandmaster on Guest nights.

Gradually the training of the Battalion was becoming more advanced, and in a time march, in which they had to arrive at a spot twelve miles distant, the head of the Column passed the point only 10 seconds out!

The Brigadier had very kindly offered to present a prize, in the shape of Medals, to the winning Battalion in a Brigade Football Competition. The 2/8th were very fortunately situated, as the whole of the Whitwell team had enlisted *en bloc*, and at this time the Battalion held an unbeaten record. On April 17th the 2/5th, a heavy hard playing lot were encountered, and after a severe game in which there was much grief, the 2/8th proved the winners by 2 goals to 0, a victory they followed up by defeating the 2/6th in the final by a similar margin.

The Parting of the Ways. On April 29th a very important communication was received from the War Office, stating that 2nd Line Units were to be asked to undertake the Imperial Service obligation. All Officers and other ranks who for various reasons were unable to serve abroad were to leave the 2nd Line and form home service Units. It meant of

course a big break up, but all who were able to make the sacrifice were delighted.

As so many Officers and N.C.O.'s were unfit the Commanding Officer decided to address the men on parade without the presence of their Officers and N.C.O.'s, feeling that it was hardly fair to ask any Officers, who through no fault of their own were unable to accept the Imperial Service obligation, to make a special appeal to their men. The response to the C.O.'s appeal for Volunteers was most gratifying. The Battalion at this time was 1,230 strong and over 1,000 Officers and other ranks decided to go wherever they might be wanted. One or two of the Officers who volunteered for Imperial Service were obviously unfit, but decided to set a good example to their men, an example which was eagerly followed.

Recruiting March through Notts.

On May 3rd a March through Nottinghamshire was, by permission of the War Office, commenced, and all the principal localities and towns in the Regimental Recruiting Area were visited. The Adjutant, Captain A. B. Leslie-Melville was in command, and he had under him a picked Detachment of Officers, N.C.O.'s and men, and they were assisted by the Battalion Band. A number of Recruits came forward, but unfortunately many were unfit. Still 154 eventually joined the Battalion, and proved a very serviceable addition to its strength.

Visit of the Bishop of Southwell.

On May 23rd the Brigade was honoured by a visit from the Lord Bishop of Southwell, who held an open air Service for the Brigade on the 2/8th Battalion Parade ground. Over 4,000 men attended, and his Lordship preached the sermon, whilst the Commanding Officer read the lessons.

Move to Dunstable.

Little beyond the usual training took place for some little time, but the Sherwood Foresters Brigade received orders to proceed to Dunstable, where they arrived early

in June. The march commenced at 2 p.m., immediately after the men's dinner, and the day was unusually hot. Not unnaturally the entry to the new station was not impressive, the very good dinner lately partaken of, the intense heat, and the large amount of dust all contributed to a big "fall out."

The 2/8th were encamped in a field by themselves, and fortunately for them on rather higher ground than that apportioned to the other Battalions. They had purchased a very serviceable hut from Messrs. Boulton & Paul, of Norwich, which proved a most useful Officers' Mess and an invaluable shelter against the many heavy thunderstorms which were shortly encountered.

It had been understood that, having undertaken Imperial Service obligations, 2nd Line Units were not expected to furnish any further drafts, and Officers, N.C.O.'s and men looked forward with delight to training a Battalion, which would remain intact and go out to the front together.

The big draft. Alas, no sooner had the Battalion as it thought settled down to this work than it was ordered to find a draft for France of 360 fit men. It was done, but it denuded the Battalion of its very best, and so hard put to it were the different companies to find their quota, that even Officers' servants had to go. It was a very sad Battalion on the morning following the departure of this fine draft, and for quite a week Officers could not settle down to their work, and their only consolation was the receipt of a delightful letter written by Colonel Fowler, who was now commanding the 1/8th in France, to the Commanding Officer.

The Young Guardsmen. In this kind and appreciative letter Colonel Fowler expressed his deep sympathy with the Battalion on losing so many fine men, "and feared that it would wreck the Battalion for the time being," but he pointed out that they were going where they would be appreciated and that he would personally look after them. He further

said that the General called them "The young Guardsmen." Shortly afterwards the Battalion had to send four more Officers to France, and these heavy drains on the personnel meant greatly retarding the departure of the Battalion for foreign service. A draft of about 180 men reached Dunstable from the 3rd line, but they were hardly of the stamp to which the Battalion was accustomed, though they tried hard.

Fortunately more Officers arrived—2nd Lieuts. J. S. C. Oates, wounded, invalided from France where he had been serving with the 1/8th Battalion, P. C. Hemingway, A. Bedford, W. N. Pitt, G. N. A. Pitt, M. B. Browne, G. A. P. Rawlings and J. E. Broad. The first and last of these Officers stayed with the Battalion throughout the heavy fighting in which it took part in France. Just when the Brigade most required a strong and experienced Officer in Command, Colonel afterwards Brigadier General E. W. Maconchy, C.B., D.S.O., C.I.E., took over command from Colonel Wright Bemrose, who was leaving the Army. The new Brigadier had seen much service on the Indian Frontier and had been Chief of the Intelligence Department in India. He and the Commanding Officer had served together as Subalterns in 1885.

Orders had now come for a move to Watford, and every one was sorry, as Dunstable was very healthy and the reports of the Watford Camping ground were the reverse of reassuring.

Brigade Sports. Brigade Sports were held on July 24th and the 2/8th Tug of War team, coached by the C.O., won rather an unexpected victory over the heavier combination of the 2/5th. The Battalion came through the day very creditably, winning more prizes than any other.

A Deluge. August 3rd, 1915, will never be forgotten by any one who was in Dunstable on that date. The Battalion was engaged on a Route March, and just as it reached the furthest point from home, one of the worst thunderstorms ever remembered by

those who were out in it, broke over the column. In five minutes everyone was drenched to the skin, but this was a mere bagatelle compared to the tragic scene in Camp. In a very short time the cook house fires were out, then the Sergeant's Mess tent came down with a run and a large amount of stores, etc., were ruined. The Canteen collapsed, and tents gave way on all sides. Finally a River of no mean dimensions, swept through the Camp, relieving the tents of any little articles that might have been left lying about.

The Quarter Master and Cooks worked wonders, and eventually after the storm ceased the fires were got going, but the other three Bâtallions suffered far more heavily as their Camps were on much lower ground. So bad indeed was the state of their lines that the men had to be hurriedly billeted in Dunstable, where there was little enough room at any time. The Officers' Mess Hut, which was being taken on to Watford, proved to be worth its weight in gold just now. A Brigade route march was ordered for next day with disastrous results, and the writer never saw so many men fall out in such a short time.

Move to On August 11th the Brigade moved to
Watford. Watford in two columns, the No. 2 column consisting of 2/7th and 2/8th Sherwood Foresters, being under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Oates. The march was about 19 miles, and the men stood the day well, reaching their new Camp in Cassio-bury Park at 5.15 p.m.

CHAPTER III.

WATFORD.

The stay at Watford deserves a chapter to itself, as the Brigade was to remain there eight months, and received the not very complimentary soubriquet of the Lost Brigade. Further trouble came shortly, as the Battalion was ordered to send 7 Officers and 80 other ranks out to France. This was "killing the goose" with a vengeance, and it was most discouraging news to everyone.

The 80 men were just the few old hands left and were a fine lot, mostly men who happened to be temporarily sick or on courses when the last draft was despatched. However orders had to be obeyed, but wolf had been cried too often, and the official "promise" that no more men would be taken from 2nd line Units was believed by nobody. It was a pity the promise was ever made, as it is always impossible to tell in War what the exigencies of the Service may demand. This draft in company with others from the Sherwood Forester Brigade left for France on August 15th, being addressed by the Brigadier before leaving.

Visit of The Colonel of the Regiment, Earl
Earl Manvers. Manvers came down to visit the Battalion on August 26th, and took the salute during the march past, afterwards witnessing some Battalion Drill. The Brigadier very kindly sanctioned a half-holiday for the men to mark the event.

Better training ground than the country round Watford it was almost impossible to find. Lord Ebury

very kindly lent Moor Park and made no objection to extensive entrenchments being dug therein. These were chiefly used for Trench Warfare by day and night. In addition there were Grove Park and Cassiobury Park, and practically the whole of the country round was placed at the disposal of the Troops. The ground in the direction of Chorley Wood was particularly interesting.

On September 15th the Divisional Commander inspected the Division in Gorhambury Park and this entailed a march of 20 miles, the men being away from Camp from 6 a.m. till 6.5 p.m. First line Transport was taken, and two hot meals were served up to the men from the Cookers. The day was really a dress rehearsal for the more important inspection by General Rundle, which took place on October 1st in the same locality. The 2/7th and 2/8th were especially commended for their smartness in the march past.

A very interesting competition took place about this time at St. Albans, which was Divisional Headquarters. Battalions and other Corps were invited to compete in marching order over an 8 mile course, the conditions being teams of 8—go as you please, the whole team to finish. There was a capital entry and the event was won by the 2/5th Leicesters in the splendid time of 1 hour 30 minutes, the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters being 2nd and only 24 seconds behind the Winners.

The Battalion was now very strong in Officers, no less than eleven arriving in one day. Of these, Lieutenants W. H. Curtis, A. H. Warry, K. McKinnon, G. Logan, E. C. F. Moffatt were destined to accompany the Battalion to France, the last four to lay down their lives for their Country and the first to be twice wounded.

Move to On October 18th a move was made into
Billets. Winter quarters, and Cassiobury Park was left without any regret, the damp and cold having affected nearly everybody.

The Area assigned to the 2/8th was the Leavesden Road, which afforded capital billets for the men, but the Officers were at some disadvantage, as there was no building suitable for an Officers' Mess, and the only

substitute to be found was a tiny building in which Officers gathered for afternoon tea. The Mess Hut which had done such splendid service was now disposed of to Messrs. Fortman & Mason for £60, and the sum put by on deposit.

Hardly had the move taken place than the Division lost the services of General McCall, who was relieved by General Reade, C.B., D.S.O., an Officer with much experience of the East and very expert in Interior Economy.

During the next few months Officers had to become efficient in this all important subject, and the words "Dripping and Bones" were at this time heard more frequently from Officers' lips than any other. A well-known wag invented and drew a most suitable motto and crest for the Division, showing a skull and cross bones with the Motto "Make no bones about it."

Visit of the Harrow Corps.

Towards the end of the month the Brigade was visited by the Harrow Cadet Corps, and the C.O. and other old Harrovians had the pleasure of meeting Masters and boys whom they knew. The Corps had tea in the Battalion Mess Rooms, whilst the 2/8th Band played a short programme of music.

Close at the back of the Leavesden Road billets was open country, with a few small woods, and a syndicate of 2/8th Officers were fortunate enough to rent about five hundred acres of very fair shooting. Bags were not large, but the ground was handy, and it was possible to go out even when only a couple of hours were available.

All went well for a time, but alas some of the members of the party forgot to take out a Game license, and the Watford Magistrates got to hear of it, and on one beautiful Autumn afternoon Nemesis, in the shape of an unsympathetic policeman descended on the party. He had selected his day with some skill, as Partridge driving was in progress, about ten guns were out, and it is doubtful if there was a license amongst them. Bribery was of no avail, and even the attempt of a well-known Newark officer to distract the Constable's attention and

invite his sympathy by alluding "to the beauty of the woods in Spring" failed utterly.

It is believed that a suitable penalty was the result of this indiscretion: nor was this all—more trouble was in store and pheasants began to disappear, owing, it was alleged to the expert stationery marksmanship of the Transport Officer and his myrmidons, who were billeted at Lee Farm close to the Shooting.

Inspection by the Inspector of Infantry. On November 10th the Battalion was inspected by Major General Dixon, C.B., with a view to testing its readiness for service abroad, an inspection which pleased everybody as it was the

first evidence of a real intention to send the Battalion out of the country.

Advent of the Zeppelins. As the days grew shorter Aerial raids became more frequent and all sorts of horrible "stunts" were ordered. On the alarm being given one unfortunate Company had to "Stand to" in Callow Land, with numberless rounds of ammunition stowed about the men's person, and detachments of puzzlingly different numbers and rank had to double to different places, some to be whisked away in motor lorries which did not come, and others to put out fires which did not burn. The Callow Land people had the worst of it, and poor Captain Woolley and his Company spent the whole of one night shivering in the cold, waiting for a flying shot at any enemy aircraft, which might be clumsy enough to get wounded or damaged during its visit to our shores.

The Battalion had now been severely tested in tactical and administrative schemes, and the Division was gradually becoming more like a fighting unit, though the Artillery was considerably behind the other Arms.

Thus ended the year 1915, and many of us wondered what was to be our lot during the fateful months to follow.

A change had taken place in the Quartermaster's Office, Captain E. R. Hooley retiring to take up an

appointment in Oxfordshire. He was succeeded by Lieutenant H. Shumach, a Warrant Officer who had served with credit in the Battalion since its formation.

Captain Staniforth had also left to take up the post of Staff Captain to the Brigade, which was now named and numbered the 178th Infantry Brigade. This appointment he held for over three years, gaining the Military Cross for very valuable services.

About the middle of January, 1915, all the senior Officers of the Division were medically examined, as the time appeared to be drawing near for the Division to proceed abroad.

Brigadier's Inspection. Towards the end of the month A and B Companies were inspected by the Brigadier, who made the gratifying announcement that ' B ' Company (Captain Woolley) " was in a class by itself " in the Brigade.

Inspection by General Codrington. On February 2nd the Division was inspected on the march by General Codrington, no compliments being paid. At the conclusion of the inspection the Commanding Officer received the intelligence from the Brigadier that the Inspecting Officer " was very pleased with the Brigade, especially the 2/8th."

On February 16th the Battalion took part in a combined exercise, which proved to be the most severe test of endurance yet experienced.

The scheme included the bridging and crossing of the River Colne and an advance by compass bearing across Country for a distance of 12 miles, at the end of which the Staffordshire Brigade were encountered holding a strong defensive position. Torrents of rain fell throughout the day, and messages became almost illegible, whilst all ranks were soaked to the skin, and thankful to reach billets at 5 p.m.

The Battalion had been reinforced by 300 Recruits raised under Lord Derby's Scheme. They were excellent material, and had been making rapid progress when the Brigadier decided to see what they could do.

Inspection of the Derby Recruits. The ensuing parade led to an amusing incident which the Brigadier will not readily forget. He was received by the 2/8th Recruits with an extremely creditable "present," bayonets being fixed. The other Battalions of the Brigade had not attempted this, and the General angrily demanded from the Commanding Officer his reasons for disobeying orders and bringing trained men on parade. For some time the General would not believe the C.O.'s statement that, barring Instructors, Recruits only were on parade.

The Battalion lost the services of its Second in Command, Major Appleby, shortly after this, owing to ill health, and indeed it was a surprise to all who knew him that he had held out so long against the insidious attacks of Asthma which so frequently assailed him. He left deeply regretted by all ranks.

His duties were taken up by Captain Martyn, though this Officer was not promoted to the rank of Major until some time afterwards.

Inspection by the Inspector of Infantry, and General Codrington. On March 9th the Battalion was inspected a second time by Major General Dixon, and he appeared well satisfied with what he saw, whilst on the following day General Codrington saw the recruits with whom he was greatly pleased.

C.O.'s visit to France. The signs of the Times pointed to a move to France in the early Summer, as C.O.'s were being sent over for weekly tours of instruction in the line, the C.O. leaving Folkstone for Boulogne on March 20th. He had an interesting and instructive visit, greatly brightened by an accidental meeting with a draft of the 2nd Munster Fusiliers, his old Regiment, at Bethune. He was ordered to Vermelles, and after lunching with Brigadier General Boyd-Moss he proceeded to the Battalion Headquarters of the 8th Royal Fusiliers, who formed part of the 36th Brigade of the 12th Division.

This Battalion was occupying front line Trenches,

their Sector including the celebrated " Hair Pin " and " Swinburne Loop." At night he witnessed a brilliant spectacle in a strong German Raid from the Hohenzollern Redoubt, no great distance away, which broke out with dramatic suddenness, and was successfully repelled. The 8th Royal Fusiliers manned Battle stations, but no attack took place on their front.

The following days were spent in attending " Stand to," watching a Relief and learning as much as possible about the daily routine of Trench warfare. A heavy bombardment by 5.9's and Trench Mortars took place on the afternoon of the second day, and eight men of the 8th Royal Fusiliers were killed.

After 3 days in the Front line, the Battalion to which the Commanding Officer was attached moved back to support Trenches, and a few days later he said 'good-bye' to Colonel Annesley and the Officers of the Battalion who had received him so hospitably, and taught him so much. On reaching Boulogne the party of senior Officers were met with the news of the torpedoing of the " Sussex," an event which caused considerable delay and much indignation.

The sea was very rough and the Commanding Officer was lucky in being placed in command of the Troops crossing over, a privilege which entitled him to a cabin on deck. The route followed was direct from Boulogne to Dover, and then up the coast to Folkstone, as the presence of the offending Submarine was strongly suspected outside Boulogne.

Fortunately for all concerned the voyage terminated without incident.

Arrival of Major General Sandbach. About this time a further change took place in the Command of the Division, Major General Sandbach, D.S.O., R.E., relieving Major General Reade.

The Great Blizzard. The month of March was not destined to " go out like a lamb," as on March 28th occurred one of the worst blizzards within human memory. It commenced at 3.30 p.m.

and raged throughout the night. A scene of disaster met the eye next morning, deep snow lay on the ground, and countless fine trees were lying across all the roads surrounding Watford, rendering them for a time impassable for traffic. Moor Park, Lord Ebury's seat, lost no less than 133 large trees, and the larches planted over the tunnel near the Leavesden Road, fell to a tree. Probably never has so much damage been done by a storm in one night in all our Island history.

April was spent by the Battalion in putting its house in order, and batches of recruits were drafted into the ranks, and last but by no means least it was photographed on Callow Land, in mass with Officers taking post in Review order. The result was excellent, and all ranks felt thankful afterwards that they had a memento of some valued comrades who were so soon to give their lives for their Country.

On April 22nd the Battalion received orders to proceed to North Mimms for the Annual Course of Musketry so long delayed. It was to be the first to go, and the date fixed was May 1st. Little did they think that their first Musketry would commence some days before the date mentioned, and that their shooting would have to stand the severest test of all, the test of Active Service.

Move At 7.30 p.m., Easter Monday (April 24th)
Orders. the 178th Brigade received orders to hold itself in readiness to move at once to an unknown destination, and the first details entrained at 4 a.m. next morning.

CHAPTER IV.

DUBLIN.

The 2/8th left in two trains at 8.30 a.m. and 10 a.m., having been served out with 120 Rounds of Ball Ammunition, Field Dressings and Iodine Ampules, in the latter case as far as they would go.

Greatly to their disappointment an order was received that all attached Officers were to be left behind, so that the Battalion lost the services, temporarily at any rate, of Lieuts. Moffatt, Logan, Mackinnon, Warry and Middleton, whilst B Company were deprived of their Commander, Captain Woolley, who was in bed with Influenza.

It soon leaked out that the trains were bound for Liverpool, and it did not require much acumen to guess that Ireland was the Battalion's destination. Care had been taken to load the two trains, so that the half Battalions should be as self dependent as possible, and two of the four Lewis guns, which had been issued to the Battalion, travelled with their crews and ammunition on each train. On arrival at Liverpool at 8 p.m. orders were received to embark 3 Companies at once on the S.S. "Patriotic," D Company and all the Lewis guns being temporarily left behind. Strong representations were made to the Embarkation Officer by the Commanding Officer, pointing out the folly of this order, but the latter was informed that men were wanted and not guns. The value of the presence of even two of these guns, in Dublin next day would have been incalculable, and the British Army seems fated to have its work blocked or

rendered as difficult as possible by officials dressed with a little brief authority, whose orders may not be questioned, and who rarely have to answer for after results. The "Patriotic" was heavily loaded up, and besides 3 Companies of the 2/8th she held various details of the Staffordshire Brigade. Lieut. Colonel Oates was placed in Command of the troops on board.

Arrival at At 10 p.m. she left Liverpool escorted by
Kingstown H.M.S. "Oscia," and after an uneventful voyage reached Kingstown Harbour at 5.30 a.m. on Wednesday, April 26th, a fateful day for 2/8th, and a day which was to act as a helpful anniversary on future occasions, when the Battalion was up against propositions more serious even than the one now facing them.

At 7 a.m. the Battalion landed, and old habitués heard the well-known cry of the newspaper man on the pier, who seems to be possessed of perennial vitality, and it seemed incredible that not 6 miles away murder and bloodshed, in their worst and most treacherous form held sway. It was a glorious morning and Ireland looked her best, which is saying a great deal, and one at least of us, who knew her well, felt sad at the prospect before the Battalion.

On reaching the Yacht Club, the Members of whom kindly gave the Officers breakfast, the seriousness of the situation was made known. Most of the centre or more important parts of Dublin, such as the Post Office, the Four Courts, Sackville Street, the Bank, etc., was in the hands of the rebels, and many unoffending and unarmed Officers and men had been brutally done to death, some of them wounded and utterly unable to protect themselves.

At 8.30 a.m. the Brigadier, Colonel afterwards Brigadier General, Maconchy, C.B., C.I.E., D.S.O., sent for Commanding Officers and gave them their orders.

The 2/5th and 2/6th, or Derbyshire portion of the Sherwood Forester Brigade were to march by the Inland route via Dolphin Barn on the Royal Hospital, Kilmain-

PLAN No 1
FIGHTING IN DUBLIN
ON APRIL 26th 1916.



ham, the Headquarters of the Irish Command, whilst the 2/7th supported by the 2/8th was to proceed along the seaside route via Ball's Bridge. Little opposition was expected South of Ball's Bridge.

The Staffordshire Brigade under Brigadier General Carlton, who was in charge of the operations, was to remain at Kingstown in Reserve.

The first day's fighting in Dublin. The two Battalions charged Magazines, and the 2/8th C.O. remembering that the greater number of the Battalion had only 3 months service, realised possibilities and marched them down to the sea for the operation, so that beyond a limited amount of danger to fishing smacks in the offing little risk was run. The Battalion marched off at 10.15 a.m. 400 yards in rear of the 2/7th, in beautiful weather. Touch between Battalions was maintained by Lieut. Hewitt and the Battalion Scouts.

Little of note occurred prior to reaching Ball's Bridge, which General Carleton, D.S.O., and the Brigadier of 178th Brigade made their Headquarters.

A certain amount of useful information had filtered through from well disposed inhabitants, as to the buildings held by the Rebels, and their general dispositions.

Lieut.-Colonels Oates and Fane, the two Commanding Officers were sent for by the Brigadier, and the O.C. 2/7th received orders to take the School just South of Mount Street Bridge on the Grand Canal, a strong point known to be held and likely to cause trouble. When this had been taken the O.C. 2/8th was ordered to bring up his Battalion, which consisted of three Companies, A, B, C, pass through the 2/7th and penetrate as far as possible in the direction of Trinity College.

At 12 noon the 2/7th first came under fire beyond Ball's Bridge. Progress was very slow, as each house had to be searched, and in some instances garrisoned.

In many cases buildings, at first apparently untenanted, were reoccupied after some of the troops had passed and young soldiers were subjected to a cruel and

in some cases accurate fire from front, rear and flanks, with no cover or supporting fire from Artillery or Machine Guns to help them—surely a trial sufficiently severe to test the staunchest veterans—and yet these young soldiers, three quarters of whom had but three months service, came through the ordeal in a manner worthy of the Regiments to which they belonged, and earned the admiration and praise of the oldest and most experienced Officers present.

Many of the Rebels were without any uniform and this greatly added to our difficulties.

Meanwhile the leading Battalion was losing heavily and Lieut.-Colonel Oates received orders to detach a Company via Serpentine Avenue, to take the Electric Power Station in rear, and if possible press on to occupy Landsdowne Road Station. Hardly however had A Company, the one detailed, started, than an order came through from the Irish Headquarters, where Brigadier General Lowe, C.B., had assumed command, that no companies were to be detached to the right flank, but that the attack was to be pressed frontally towards the Grand Canal. A Company (Captain Quibell) was consequently recalled and a long halt ensued, taken advantage of by some of the old soldiers of A Company to get a shave!

At 4.40 p.m. the Brigadier sent for Lieut.-Colonel Oates and told him that the 2/7th had suffered terribly, that their C.O. and most of their Officers were wounded and the Adjutant killed; further that owing to the heavy casualties which they had suffered, and the long period during which they had been under fire, they could not be expected to storm the Mount Street Schools. He was therefore ordered to bring his Battalion up, pass through the 2/7th and “go on with the job.” The exact orders given were:—“Your Battalion will storm the Mount Street Schools at all costs, **at all costs** mind, penetrate further if you can.”

The 2/8th At 5.50 p.m. the O.C. 2/8th called for
under fire. all Officers and a few senior W.O.'s
and N.C.O.'s, and gave the following
orders. “Round the bend of the road, on the right, is

the School and several houses strongly held. These must be taken to-night at all costs. "B" Company will lead, "A" will be in close support to press the attack home, "C" Company in Reserve. Start in 3 minutes—once under fire move quickly."

The Storming of the Schools. The Schools which were just over 150 yards away were pointed out by the C.O., the Brigadier being present and listening to the orders given.

"B" Company moved off at 6 p.m. mostly down the left side of the street, losing very heavily from the start, and were checked just in front of the Schools. "A" Company (less No. 2 platoon which had been detached to guard Prisoners), gallantly led by Captain Quibell, at once moved up and realising that the hottest fire was directed on the left side of the street, pressed forward on the right side of Northumberland Road, and got their attack home. The Officer commanding the Company climbed the railings in front of the School, and followed by his Company Sergt.-Major and the men of the leading platoon, speedily ousted the enemy from the building.

In the meantime Lieutenant Daffen, who was commanding "B" Company led them down the left side of Northumberland Road in the endeavour to cross Mount Street Bridge, and capture Clanwilliam House, a strongly defended building which commanded the recently captured Schools and the approach to the Bridge and Schools. His gallantry cost him his life, as although 2nd Lieut. Browne and he succeeded in crossing the fire swept bridge, they were both shot down just beyond its North West Corner, Lieut. Daffen being killed instantaneously and 2nd Lieut. Browne dying of his wounds two days later. These Officers had been accompanied by Lieut. Hewitt and his scouts who were now reduced to two, and by Lieut. C. P. Elliott with what was left of his platoon. The latter also was severely wounded on the Bridge, and Lieut. Hewitt taking cover at the South West Corner of the Bridge, endeavoured, with the aid of his scouts to discount, by rapid fire on the windows of Clanwilliam House, the accuracy of the enemy's aim.

“ B ” Company as a fighting unit had practically ceased to exist, all its Officers, its Sergeant Major and all the Sergeants being either killed or wounded.

The Commanding Officer meanwhile had decided to bring up “ C ” (the Reserve Company) under Captain F. Cursham and despatched his Adjutant with the message. The latter, Captain A. B. Leslie-Melville, an old 4th Notts. Officer lost no time in doing this, and anxious to see some fighting went on with the Company, only to fall very speedily severely wounded. His wound was very serious, and necessitated 6 months treatment in Hospital. His loss was deeply deplored both by the Battalion and the C.O., to whom he had been a loyal and efficient Adjutant for the past 18 months. Meanwhile Captain Quibell had been joined by Captain Cooper, Lieutenant Foster and three or four men of the 2/7th near the Schools, and these Officers reinforced by Captains Cursham, Branston and 2nd Lieut. Curtis and “ C ” Company, worked their way up a narrow passage in rear of the School, and reached the Canal Bank slightly to the North East of the Bridge. Here they had the protection of the low Canal Wall, which directly faced Clanwilliam House, but their view of the house was masked by an advertisement boarding, raised above the wall. A few casualties occurred here owing to the fire from Clanwilliam House penetrating the boarding, and after a brief rest it was decided to try and rush the bridge and reach this fortified house. A certain amount of assistance was given by half a dozen men, who under the direction of the C.O., were firing from behind some steps at the six windows of Clanwilliam House, in an endeavour to assist the assaulting party.

**The taking of
Clanwilliam
House.**

Shouting to Lieut. Hewitt, who was crouching behind the bridge on the other side of the road, Captain Quibell gallantly led the charge across the bridge, closely followed by Lieut. Hewitt and Lieut. Foster of the 7th and a number of “ C ” Company under Captains Cursham and Branston. The Sergt.-Major of the Company, Coy. Sergt.-Major Dixie, a very valuable

N.C.O., was killed here and Captain Cursham and Lieut. Curtis wounded, but the charge swept on, and Clanwilliam House was reached only to find the doors barricaded. Captain Quibell, who had been slightly wounded, succeeded however in breaking a window and with Lieut. Foster entered the building.

Lieut. Hewitt realising the necessity for bombs, very pluckily recrossed the bridge and succeeded in obtaining a bucketful, a supply of which our Brigadier had thoughtfully procured with great difficulty.

Returning with these to Clanwilliam House the lower rooms were bombed, and the staircase which was barricaded ascended with some difficulty. The remaining Rebels were shot and in addition eight dead were counted.

The floors of the upper rooms were strewn with shavings and straw and caught fire, by what means is uncertain, and in an incredibly short time the whole house was burning fiercely, and had to be evacuated at 10.30 p.m.

No one who saw it will ever forget the spectacle—the blazing House in the background, with the spurts of fire coming from the Rifles of the Rebels concealed on the neighbouring housetops and behind the street windows, the answering shots from the

**The Appearance
of the Red Cross
Nurses.**

troops, and grandest sight of all—four white robed Red Cross Nurses calmly walking down the centre of street between the combatants, their leader holding her right hand above her head, demanding that their errand of mercy should be undisturbed. Largely owing to the courage of these devoted women, assisted nobly by loyal inhabitants, the wounded were speedily dragged into the neighbouring houses and received whatever attention was possible on the spot.

It was obviously impossible to ascertain the position or state of these wounded for many days, as the Battalion was fighting all next day, and left for the South of Ireland the day after, and greatly to his regret the Com-

manding Officer was unable to give relations of the wounded any information as to their condition, although the Irish Command did their utmost to help in the matter.

As signalling had been reported in Mount Street, Lieut. Hewitt with a small party was ordered to occupy an advanced post some 250 yards further down Mount Street, whilst acting under orders from the Irish Command to halt and consolidate on the Line of the Canal, the Battalion set to work to render their position secure for the night.

“B” Company, commanded by Bandmaster Cooper, held the line of the Canal from the Bridge to Grand Canal Street, from which a hot enemy fire was coming, and strengthened the position by building a barricade composed of pieces of Turf taken from a neighbouring stack.

A mixed picquet from “A” and “C” occupied the buildings in Percy Place, whilst the remainder of the Battalion held the School Buildings, and Battalion Headquarters were situated at 23 Northumberland Road, a building used by the Brigade for the same purpose, when they moved forward from Ball’s Bridge.

At 2 a.m. the Battalion was relieved by the 2/6th South Staffords and marched back to Ball’s Bridge Show grounds, where all ranks got a few hours sleep and some breakfast. Here to our great delight we were joined by the 2nd in Command, Captain Martyn and “D” Company (Captain J. S. C. Oates, M.C.) They had crossed in S.S. “Ulster,” escorted by the Destroyer “Nicator,” and the 2nd in Command had never ceased from worrying until he obtained permission to take the Company forward, a permission which was not accorded to the Lewis Gun Detachment of the Battalion, which for some inexplicable reason was ordered to remain at Kingstown. During the night orders were received to concentrate on the Royal Hospital, and acting on these the Brigadier decided to move off soon after midday. Lieut.-Colonel Oates was placed in command of the advanced guard, which consisted of the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters, who

were followed by the main body composed of the 2/7th Sherwood Foresters, Brigade Headquarters, R.E. and A.S.C., the 2/7th throwing out a small rear guard.

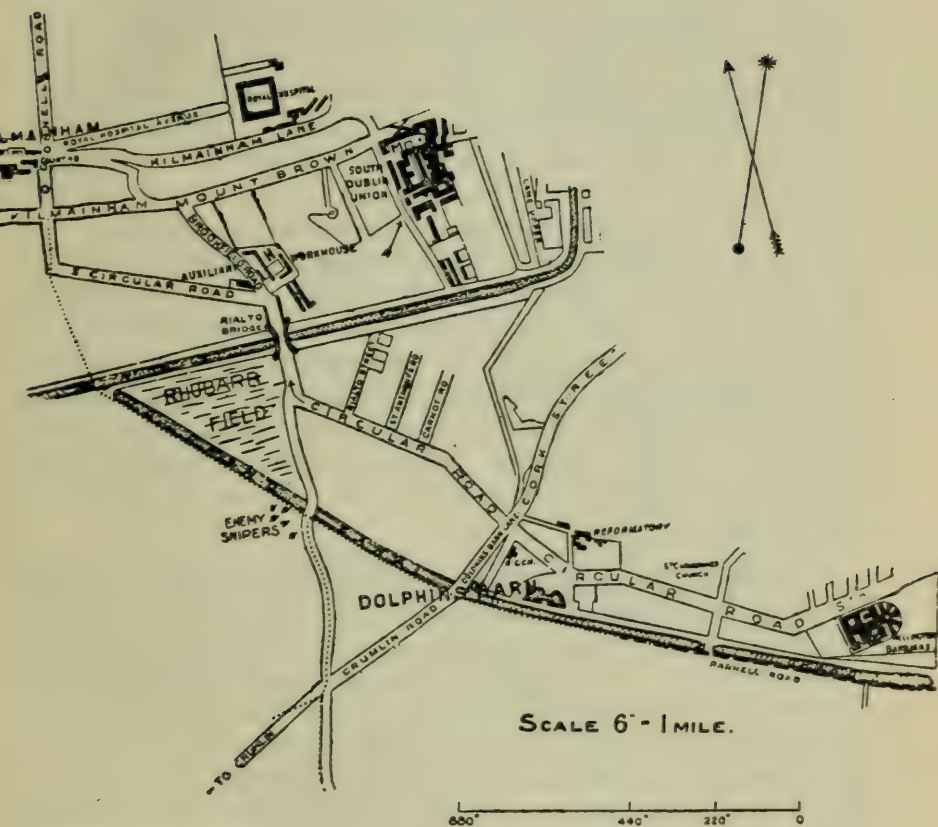
The 2nd day's Fighting. Little or no opposition was expected as the 2/5th and 2/6th Sherwood Foresters had crossed Rialto Bridge without any trouble, and without seeing any of the enemy, on the previous day.

The route to be followed was via Wellington Barracks, South Circular Road, Rialto Bridge and Royal Hospital Avenue, a district very familiar fortunately to the Commanding Officer, who as a Munster Fusilier had spent over two years in Wellington Barracks.

All went well until the vicinity of the canal was reached about 2.15 p.m., when a fusillade was opened on the Column, at very close quarters from Rialto Street, and this unfortunately stampeded a number of R.E. horses. The Bridge had already been occupied as a precautionary measure, and the Advanced Guard Commander ordered Captain Martyn to detach a party from the leading Company to clear the Buildings in Rialto Street, and in the immediate vicinity of the Bridge. Meanwhile the O.C., the leading Company (Captain Oates, M.C.) reported firing from the front, and this was speedily followed by a number of shots from a Rhubarb field, S.W. of the Bridge, vide Plan II, and sniping from tall trees due South. The Column had halted, and it was obviously necessary to thoroughly clear the front and flanks before the very steep and narrow defile of Rialto Bridge could be crossed by the Brigade Transport, especially as it was a very conspicuous mark to an enemy occupying the neighbouring buildings.

With this end in view Captain Dimock with " A " Company was ordered to clear the Rhubarb Field, force the Bridge over the Canal, and clear out the enemy snipers South of the Bridge (vide Plan II). " C " Company was brought up to secure the line of advance along South Circular Road, with a Platoon at Rialto Bridge where Advanced Guard Headquarters were established.

PLAN No 2
FIGHTING IN DUBLIN
ON APRIL 27th 1918.



REFERENCES.

— REBELS MAIN POSITION.

— MATERNITY WARD.

— ENTRY OF ASSAULTING TROOPS.

Captain Martyn had now completed his task, and received further orders from the O.C. Advanced Guard to clear the Auxiliary Workhouse, and occupy as much as possible of the South Dublin Union, with a view to distracting the enemy's attention whilst the Transport crossed the Bridge.

The Auxiliary Workhouse did not give much trouble, but on coming into the open, on their way to the Union Captain Martyn's party consisting of about 40 men came under a heavy fire from the South Dublin Union, from which the Rebel Flag could be seen flying. Here they were reinforced by a small party under Captain Oates, and as some 250 yards of open ground had to be crossed, it was deemed best to advance in a series of rushes, the party in rear giving covering fire as far as possible. It was soon obvious that a frontal attack would fail, as all the doors and windows of the building were strongly barricaded, and it was decided to make an attempt to work round the enemy's left flank and effect an entrance to the long series of buildings in that manner (vide arrow on Plan II). This manœuvre was successful, but it was found that there was no communication between the buildings occupied by our troops and those occupied by the enemy.

Working North along the buildings, the open ground between buildings M (Maternity Ward) and X (Rebels Main position) was crossed by Captains Martyn and Oates with a small party, the remainder holding the Maternity Ward, which directly faced the buildings held by the Rebels, who were reported by the Ward Staff to be about 200 strong. On arrival inside Building X the party found themselves in close proximity to the Rebels, with a thin brick wall about 9 inches thick alone separating the combatants.

A pick was sent for, and a breach made in the wall through which Captains Martyn and Oates, followed by Corporal afterwards Sergeant Walker, and two privates, penetrated. On emerging from the breach the party found themselves in front of a strong loopholed barricade on the other side of which the Rebels were posted in

force. The intervening ground was swept by rifle fire from the loopholes, and cover could only be obtained by a rush to the ground immediately under the loopholes.

In making the rush the two privates were killed, but the remainder of the party succeeded in reaching the Barricade and in tearing a portion of the woodwork away.

An attempt to throw a bomb amongst the enemy nearly caused disaster, as the missile rolled back amongst the party, but it was pluckily seized and thrown accurately amongst the enemy by Captain Martyn, an act for which he was to most deservedly receive the Military Cross.

It was now getting late, and further progress with the small force at his disposal seeming out of the question, Captain Martyn decided to hold the ground he had taken, sending back for food, water and reinforcements. With this end in view Captain Oates was left in charge of the breach with a few men, whilst Captain Martyn went back to organise the defence in the Maternity Ward, with the remainder.

Meanwhile "A" Company had succeeded, with some difficulty in clearing the left flank, and Lieut.-Colonel Oates was able to report to the Brigadier that the front and left flanks were clear, and that Captain Martyn's attack had caused the enemy's dropping fire on Rialto Bridge practically to cease.

The Brigadier came to the Bridge himself and informed the C.O. that he had decided to bring his Transport over the bridge at a gallop, and that he wished parties to be ready to man handle any wagon wheels, should it be necessary. The Transport crossed safely, with only one bullet hole in one wagon, but the Advanced Guard on the Bridge had an anxious time, as some of the A.S.C. Drivers appeared to consider it necessary to brandish loaded Rifles with one hand, whilst driving with the other, and we heaved a deep sigh of thankfulness when they had departed.

Little time was wasted, and soon the whole of the main body had cleared the Bridge and reached the entrance to the Royal Hospital. This fact having been signalled back, Lieut Colonel Oates sent orders to the two flanks to retire on Rialto Bridge, where the remainder of the Battalion was awaiting them. This was a fairly easy matter as far as the left was concerned, but the right flank had a bad time, and the Rebels, guessing what was happening were making continuous rushes on the positions they were holding.

The withdrawal however was very skilfully effected, by no means without loss to the enemy, and the party safely reached the Bridge about 9.45 p.m.

The March was resumed at once, and a very tired Battalion reached the Royal Hospital, at 10.15 p.m., very glad to see their Comrades of the 2/7th lying next door to them.

Our casualties considering the length of the fighting were extraordinary light, namely 3 killed and 7 wounded and it was a source of great pride to the Battalion that they had carried out their arduous task so efficiently, and that there were only two casualties in the Brigade, outside the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters.

The enemy's casualties were unknown, but were believed to be fairly heavy, and at least one Senior Rebel Officer was seen to fall during the fighting.

The two days fighting had been a very severe strain on all ranks, especially the recruits, of whom there were a very large number in the Battalion, and it was a matter of universal comment that the Brigade had had every form of advanced training, to render them fit for active service, with the one exception of street fighting, the most trying form of warfare, a fact that made the Officers of the Battalion more than ordinarily proud of the behaviour of those under them.

There were many acts of gallantry which were noticed, and probably more unnoticed, and it may not be out of place here to mention that Captain Quibell was

destined to receive the D.S.O., for his gallant leading on April 26th, whilst Captains Martyn and Hewitt were to receive the Military Cross for coolness under fire and Battalion Sergt.-Major Lacey, Band Sergeant Cooper, C.M.S. King and Corporal A .E. Walker all received the D.C.M.

Captain J. S. C. Oates' conduct was favourably reported upon by Captain Martyn, and he and his father the C.O. were mentioned in Sir John French's Despatches, which appeared later on. Private F. Snowdin's behaviour was beyond all praise, as although twice wounded he continued firing until loss of blood caused him to collapse.

Private J. Hill also showed surprising coolness and contempt of danger, so much so, that his conduct was brought to the notice of the C.O. by Officers of both the Battalions concerned in the fighting.

The writer would wish to make some reference to the exceptional gallantry of Lieut Foster of the 2/7th Sherwood Foresters, who accompanied the 2/8th in their charge across Mount Street Bridge, and also to thank Lieut-Colonel Fane, D.S.O., Major Rayner, D.S.O., and other senior Officers of the Robin Hoods for the information as to local conditions, which they gave him, when he was ordered by the Brigadier to bring up his Battalion and take up the fighting.

Soon after the arrival of the Battalion at the Royal Hospital, the Brigadier informed the O.C. 2/8th that he would entrain his Battalion at 7.30 a.m. next morning for the South of Ireland, where a serious rising had taken place.

CHAPTER V.

ATHLONE AND THE MOBILE COLUMN.

During the night further orders had been received that the Battalion was to take 7 days Rations and 100 Rounds S.A.A. per man with them to Athlone, and in addition some 18 pounder Ammunition for the Royal Artillery stationed there.

Lieut.-Colonel Aitchison and the 2/5th Sherwood Foresters were in charge at Kingsbridge Station, and the train was speedily got under weigh.

On arrival at Athlone the Battalion was met by the O.C. Troops, Colonel Gubbins, R.A., and this Officer in an interview with the Officer Commanding the Battalion stated that in his opinion troops were badly wanted at Athenry, a disloyal centre, where Mellows had collected a fairly large force of Rebels, and he ordered the Battalion on there, as all was quiet at Athlone. Lieut.-Colonel Oates asked for a Gun as he did not know what he was up against, and the O.C. Troops promised to send one after the Battalion by special train.

When the train steamed into Ballinasloe the County Inspector of Police, Colonel Clayton, appeared and afforded some very valuable information as to the dispositions and strength of the Rebels. He strongly advised the C.O. to move to Loughrea, pointing out that at Athenry every move would be watched and reported to the Insurgents, whereas Loughrea was loyal and a better base for operations and supplies; he further said that he would gladly place himself and 360 Royal Irish

Constabulary from Belfast, under Lieut.-Colonel Oates' orders, an action which was very greatly appreciated.

The latter decided to take this advice and sent a telegram announcing this decision to the O.C. Troops, Athlone, at the same time arranging to stop the Detachment Royal Artillery with the 18 pounder at Attymon, the junction for the branch line to Loughrea.

The train was stopped at Dunsandle station, as from this high ground an excellent view of the country round could be obtained. Information was forthcoming to the effect that the Rebel Force was believed to be 900 to 1500 strong, that it occupied an entrenched position of considerable strength at Moyode Castle, 9 miles North West of Loughrea, and possessed 3 Machine Guns. It was commanded by the notorious Mellowses, with whom was Father Feeney. Discipline was said to be very good.

Arrival at Loughrea. Loughrea was reached without mishap, a pilot engine leading the way, and the Force, consisting of one 18lb. Field Gun with a detachment of Royal Artillery under Lieut. Holway, the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters, and 360 Royal Irish Constabulary was billeted comfortably in the town that night.

A Conference was held, and as the immediate vicinity of Moyode Castle was thickly wooded and the country broken, Lieut.-Colonel Oates decided to advance early next morning, seize Holly Park House, and clear the Dunsandle demesne with the country N. and N.E. of it, thus safeguarding our rear when we changed direction for the advance on Moyode, and at the same time minimising the risk of a Rebel raid on the Railway.

The men were given a good night's rest, as they had had little since leaving England, and the Advanced Guard, consisting of the Battalion Scouts, "D" Company and 40 Royal Irish Constabulary, the whole under Captain J. S. C. Oates, M.C., passed the starting point at 10 a.m., followed by the R.I.C., the Detachment R.F.A. with escort. and the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters

in the order named. A small rearguard followed with two Motor Lorries with supplies and ammunition.

The Force had moved off when a wire arrived from the Irish Command to withdraw the Battalion and Gun to Athlone, unless it was already committed or the withdrawal might affect the safety of the Police. After a consultation with Colonel Clayton, the Commanding Officer decided to advance, and shortly afterwards Holly Park House was occupied and Force Headquarters posted there. There was practically no opposition, beyond a stray shot or two, but it took time to clear Dunsandle demesne, and we took no chances.

Moyode The Moyode position was carefully recon-
Castle noitred and as scouts reported an enemy
occupied. withdrawal, the force pushed rapidly on,
 and the Castle was occupied without fighting. It was a position of considerable strength, and great difficulty would have been found in selecting a suitable gun position except at the very short range of 200 yards. There was considerable disappointment at the bloodless nature of the occupation, especially on the part of the Artillery, who were fairly "itching" to let off their gun. A few prisoners were taken and handed over to the Police, but all arms had vanished. On the Caretaker being questioned, he stated that the Insurgents were about 1000 strong, but that not all were well armed. Discipline was, he stated, good, and a regular Nursing Staff had been organised.

As the Police had no great coats with them, they were billeted inside the Castle, whilst the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters placed a cordon of outposts round the demesne, the Artillery being in front of the Castle entrance.

It was a darkish night, and as is not unusual under similar circumstances there was a certain amount of firing. The 2nd in Command eventually detected an offender, who on being questioned as to his reasons for firing made an alliterative reply which practically put punishment out of the question. Late that night orders

were received from Irish Command to withdraw the Battalion and gun to Athlone.

After a consultation with the High Sheriff of the County and Colonel Clayton, the Commanding Officer wired to Headquarters stating that he believed that a withdrawal would bring up the whole country side, and requesting permission to remain.

This was granted and arrangements were made to pursue the enemy, who had scattered in the direction of Lime Park and Tullira Castle.

Sunday the 30th April was spent as a day of rest, only too well earned. It was a glorious day and the C.O. took the opportunity of addressing the Battalion, and thanking them for their work.

Divine service was held in the Park, and Captain Delafield in his sermon paid a fine tribute to the services of those who had fallen.

On May 1st a move was made on Lime Park whither the Rebels were reported to have gone. Ten Motor Lorries were requisitioned, and brought to the rendezvous during the night and in these were stowed a mixed mobile force of 2/8th and R.I.C., amongst whom were our Lewis Gun Detachment, and most of our attached Officers, who had now rejoined us.

Alas the enemy were "not taking any," and had scattered the previous day, in the wilderness of the Gort Hills, whither only police who were acquainted with the District could hope to follow them.

On May 1st orders were received to return to Loughrea, and Officers and men enjoyed some excellent bathing in the Lough.

Athlone. On the following day the Battalion left for Athlone in two trains, and on arrival were billeted most comfortably in Barracks, the Royal Artillery going out of their way to make all ranks as happy as possible in their new surroundings.

There was now time to get in reports from the different companies mentioning acts of gallantry and good service, and an Officer was sent to Dublin with a list of Recommendations, whilst the C.O. took the opportunity of issuing a special order of the day, a copy of which is shown on the next page, promoting some and congratulating other Warrant Officers, N.C.O.'s and men for gallantry in the Field.

The "Irish Times," ever to the fore, when a lead in the right direction is necessary, printed a leading article called "A Debt of Honour."

In this memorable column an appeal was made to the Citizens of Dublin to contribute to a fund in aid of the dependents of the soldiers who were killed in the recent fighting and an extract may prove interesting. "The Sherwood Foresters, who bore the brunt of the fierce fighting in Lansdowne, Pembroke and Northumberland Roads, suffered most heavily of all. They lost 6 Officers and 24 men killed. The citizens of Dublin owe a big debt to these gallant Regiments. The English Territorials—mere lads most of them—who saw their first active service under the trying conditions of street fighting in Dublin were notably brave and self-restrained. Since peace has been restored their patience, civility and good humour have been a credit to themselves and their training, and a great advantage to Dublin. We hope that the citizens will not be unmindful of their obligations to the widows and children of the soldiers who gave their lives for Dublin's women and children."

Our

Casualties.

And indeed the Battalion had lost heavily and of its best. Two Officers were killed Lieut. Daffen and 2nd Lieut. Browne, the one a clever and promising leader, the other a man of the mature age of 40, who had no previous military training, but who patriotically obeyed his country's call and set a fine example to younger men.

No less than 6 others were wounded, the Adjutant, Captain Leslie Melville so seriously that he never rejoined the Battalion, whilst Captains Cursham and

EXTRACT FROM BATTALION ORDERS
BY
LIEUT.-COLONEL W. COAPE OATES, COMMANDING
2/8th BATTN. SHERWOOD FORESTERS.

PART 2.

3rd May, 1916.

Para. 2. PROMOTIONS.

The Commanding Officer has been pleased to make the following Promotions for Gallantry and Coolness in the Field :—

- ‘A’ Coy.—3650 L/Cpl. Jackson, H. D., to be Corporal to date from 26/4/16.
2738 L/Cpl. Dove, F. H., to be Corporal to date from 26/4/16.
‘B’ Coy.—3825 L/Cpl. Kendrick, W., to be Corporal to date from 26/4/16.
2426 Pte. Willoughby, T., to be Corporal to date from 26/4/16.
‘C’ Coy.—3886 Pte. Hill, J., to be Corporal to date from 26/4/16.
‘A’ Coy.—3727 Pte. Savage, F., to be L/Cpl., paid, to date from 24/4/16.
‘B’ Coy.—3818 Pte. Hall, F., to be L/Cpl., paid, to date from 24/4/16.
‘C’ Coy.—4697 Pte. Bowring, L. G., to be L/Cpl., paid, to date from 24/4/16.
‘D’ Coy.—3894 Pte. Walker, A., to be L/Cpl., paid, to date from 24/4/16.

All above to complete establishment.

Para. 3. CONGRATULATIONS.

The following N.C.O's and men have also distinguished themselves, and the Commanding Officer wishes to congratulate them for their Gallantry and Coolness in the Field. They will be granted 2 days Extra Pay out of the Commanding Officer's Fund and excused all extra duties and fatigues for one month, to date from 26th ulto. In the case of those who have lost their lives, the gratuity will be sent to the next of kin.

‘A’ Coy.—

2505 C.S.M. King, W. H.	4136 Pte. Holland, L. (<i>Killed</i>).
4045 Pte. Snowdin, F.	4401 Pte. Pattison, A.

‘B’ Coy.—

3190 C.S.M. Lawrence, H.	3475 Sergt. Becke, C. E.
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‘C’ Coy.—

2454 C.S.M. Dixey, H. C. (<i>Killed</i>).	2543 Sergt. Dmr. Cooper, R. M.
3483 Pte. Carr, H. P.	3844 Pte. Rawdin, F.

‘D’ Coy.—

3896 Pte. Negus, F. H.	2734 Pte. Hagues, H.
4129 Pte. Harrison, E.	3078 Pte. Barrett, H.
4643 Pte. Warner, A. (<i>Killed</i>).	

(Signed) A. H. QUIBELL,

Captain and Adjutant.

Quibell with Lieuts. C. P. Elliott, Curtis and Broad were all more or less seriously wounded. Some very valuable Warrant and Non-Commissioned Officers also were on the Casualty List. C.S.M. Dixie, an especially promising W.O. being killed, whilst C.S.M. Lawrence and Sergts. Jackson and Beck were very severely wounded.

The casualties of the Battalion totalled 2 Officers and 16 other ranks killed, and 6 Officers and 63 other ranks wounded.

The Mobile Column. On May 4th Lieut.-Colonel Oates received orders to the effect that Mobile Columns were shortly to be established with a view to arresting dangerous Sinn Feiners, collecting arms and pacifying the Country.

Further that he was placed in Command of No. 2 Mobile Column which was to operate in the Athlone Area.

It consisted of 1 Squadron of 10th Reserve-Regiment of Cavalry, stationed at the Curragh.

1-18 pr. Gun to be sent from Curragh.

1 Armoured Car.

2 Companies of 2/8th Sherwood Foresters.

Supplies for 10 days and petrol were to be sent to Athlone immediately.

All arms, ammunition and prisoners were to be sent under escort to Dublin.

A daily progress report was to be sent by telegram to Headquarters Irish Command and also to Brigadier General Lowe, C.B., who was in supreme command of the 4 Mobile Columns.

Any Sinn Feiners who resisted arrest might be dealt with by Court Martial on the spot.

As " B " and " C " Companies of the 2/8th had suffered most heavily it was decided to leave them behind at Athlone, and to make up " A " (Captain Dimock) and " D " (Captain Oates, M.C.) to a total strength of 400 men.

By the evening of May 4th the Cavalry, under Captain Partridge, Gun and Armoured Car had all arrived, and all that was required was an Officer with local knowledge, and this want was supplied shortly, as Major Burke was sent down from Dublin to join the Column as Intelligence Officer. He was an Irishman with much tact and proved throughout the following month of the greatest assistance to the O.C. the Column.

The Athlone area was a formidable one and as at first constituted comprised a district measuring about 100 miles by 60.

Boundaries of Area. It was bounded on the North by a line running from Claremorris, through Dunmore, Roscommon, Kilesken, Ballymahon, Mullingar, as far as Trim. The Eastern boundary ran from Trim across the River Liffey at a point 5 miles W. of Kilcock, through Edenderry, Portarlinton to Maryborough; the Southern boundary went from Maryborough, Roscrea to a point 5 miles S. of Killaloe, from thence N.E. through Tulla, Corropin, Kilpinora and through to the coast. The Western boundary is from this point along the coast to Galway and from thence in a straight line N. to Claremorris.

A fairly tall order! The other Column Commanders were as follows:—

No. 1, Longford, was commanded by Lieut.-Colonel Hodgkin, D.S.O.

No. 3, Kilkenny, Colonel Goring.

No. 4, Castle Bar, Colonel B.P. Portal, D.S.O.
all being Cavalry men.

These boundaries were slightly modified later on, the Commanders of the smaller districts assisting those more heavily burdened. Column Commanders were ordered to co-operate, and not to adhere too rigidly to their boundaries.

The advice of Messrs. Beirne and Yates having been sought as to the local situation, it was decided to begin at home, as Athlone and the district round were seriously disaffected.

Accordingly a plain clothes reconnoitering party, composed mainly of senior 2/8th Warrant Officers, who happened to be policemen in private life, was despatched to Shannon Bridge and Ferbane.

On May 6th it was decided to commence operations in earnest, and at 3 a.m. the Cavalry raided Drumraney, about 10 miles away to the N.E. and the Infantry (2/8th Sherwood Foresters) Coosan 2 miles North and also the town of Athlone. The operation was completely successful the inhabitants apparently not dreaming of its likelihood.

Twenty-eight prisoners and some arms were captured, and a suspiciously large quantity of gold. Most of the former were sent up to Dublin for trial and the latter handed over to the police and banked.

Brigadier General Lowe came to Athlone on May 8th, and very thoughtfully ordered a ceremonial parade of the Battalion, at which he complimented it on the way it had behaved in Dublin. His visit and manner inspired all ranks with a strong personal liking and desire to carry out his orders to the best of their ability.

He informed the C.O. generally as to how he wished the different columns to act, and stated that he would periodically visit each.

Move to Loughrea. The Column moved to Loughrea next day, and the 2/8th renewed their acquaintance with their friends the Royal Irish Constabulary.

The weather unfortunately had now broken and all through the month of May, whilst the column was operating, the vilest weather was experienced. Invariably on days when drives had been planned it rained incessantly, and tried the young soldiers' stamina severely.

The policy to be pursued by the Column comprised a sudden surrounding of disloyal Areas by the Cavalry, all egress being blocked, whilst the Infantry systematically drove the enclosed Area section by section, sending all suspects to Police Examination posts whose position had been determined beforehand.

The first Raid. Acting on these lines it was decided to surround and search the triangle Shanclough Castle—Athenry—Craughwell during the early morning of May 11th and with this end in view the whole of the Reserve Squadron moved off at 1.30 a.m., and by 3 a.m. the area comprising some 14 miles was sealed.

The Infantry, some details of which had to march nearly fourteen miles paraded at various hours during the night, marching off independently. One company which left at 9 p.m. the previous evening was under Arms continuously for fifteen hours. The going was heavy, the country being much broken, covered with low scrub, etc., and soon after dawn the rain, which had held off during the night, descended in torrents.

Gradually the whole ground was driven to the apex of the triangle, where the gun had been placed as a stop, whilst the armoured car patrolled the roads to assist the cavalry and convey suspects to the Examination Posts.

In the result 9 prisoners were retained and sent to Dublin for trial and a few Rifles, some of Italian make, collected.

The Cookers were waiting, when operations were over, and the men were marched without any delay to the spot where hot tea and hot stew awaited them.

After a short rest, the column marched on to Athenry, a hot-bed of sedition, which badly wanted the lesson it was to get.

Athenry. The 2/8th Transport occupied the Government Farm, as the Advanced party of the Cavalry had overlooked it, and very comfortable were Captain W. N. Wright and his party in consequence.

The 2/8th horses never looked back after the week of good feeding which they got at the Farm.

Column Headquarters were at the Railway Hotel, and Officers and men billeted as usual in the various hotels and buildings.

A Cavalry Raid took place next day when, accompanied by the Armoured Car, 60 Sabres searched Coldwood and Kileenmore, a bad district.

Here they had luck, capturing a man named Hynes, who had been wanted for murder for 6 years.

It was decided that more or less of an example should be made of Athenry, and the Country being under Martial Law, Lieut. Colonel Oates decided to allow no one to leave their houses between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m., and to close all public houses except for a very short period each day, viz., between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Picquets were on duty in the streets during the night and for the first time for 10 years the Union Jack floated from the Castle, and loyal folks could once again hold up their heads.

The Police informed the C.O. that more good had been done in a week than during the last 20 years.

A proclamation was printed and posted up in various parts of the town, informing all whom it might concern of the restrictions imposed and of the penalties of disobedience. Sour looks on the part of the townsfolk were not tolerated, and they were told plainly that it would be wiser to look pleasant, when meeting soldiers. This evidently greatly tickled their fancy and broad grins were promptly in evidence in place of their previous sullen demeanour. Irishmen have never failed to see a joke, whatever other faults they may have.

By May 13th the C.O. was able to report that the Area N. of a line drawn from Galway to Ballinasloe was clear of Sinn Feiners.

On the following day Tullira Castle, the residence of Edward Martin, was surrounded just before dawn and thoroughly searched, in company with the area near it. The operation was not as successful as was hoped, as the action of the station master at Athenry, in delaying the trains by which the Cavalry were to move, caused them to be late and to leave a gap in the circle.

So suspicious was his conduct that he was placed under arrest, and brought before the C.O. and plainly

informed that unless things went better in future, he might find himself with his back to a wall some fine morning. A Guard was placed on the station and no further trouble was experienced.

On May 15th a number of suspected houses were raided in Athenry; evidently greatly to their surprise, and 5 sub-leaders and some arms were taken, the men as usual being sent up to Dublin for trial.

Move to Killaloe. Next morning the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters left Athenry in two trains for Killaloe—the Cavalry having previously moved to Gort, a convenient centre from which they could work. Before leaving the C.O. sent for six of the leading inhabitants and told them that he would hold them personally responsible for any lawlessness which might occur, after his departure, in or near Athenry, a statement which seemed to impress them, and it was noticeable that Athenry's behaviour was unusually lamblike for some time to come.

The arrival of the Battalion at Killaloe was signalled by a bad accident.

The two companies of the 2/8th had been billeted in a large empty hotel by the side of the River Shannon, which owing to the recent rains was coming down in great volume, with all the weight of water in Lough Derg behind it.

Several boats were moored to the bank in the meadow below the Hotel, and the men had been warned not to meddle with them. Three men however disobeyed the order and entered one of the boats, the painter of which broke. There were no oars in the boat, and it was swiftly carried towards the weir and bridge. On striking the latter it overturned, and one of the men succeeded in holding on to the bridge until rescued, the remaining two being carried down the stream, which was running at a great pace. Two boatmen who were fortunately fishing at the time skilfully rescued one of the men, but Pte. Charlesworth had disappeared, and his body was not recovered until eight days later. The incident naturally cast a gloom over the Battalion. Sergt.

Martin had at considerable personal risk jumped into the swollen stream, an example, it was noticed, which was not followed by any of the local onlookers.

On May 17th Brigadier General Lowe paid a visit to the Column, and expressed himself as very satisfied with the work done at Athenry.

Next day the C.O. motored to Tulla, via Lough Graney, to see the Cavalry, who had lately moved there, and to hold a consultation with the County Inspector for County Clare.

It was decided to split up the force as much as possible, with a view to showing the troops all over the countryside, as no opposition to authority was now likely, and in accordance with this policy "A" Company under Captain Dimock was despatched to Scariff so as to be within reach of Feakle, a very disaffected spot, which was surrounded at dawn on the 19th with very satisfactory results. The four men wanted were all taken and brought into Killaloe on the Saturday, which happened to be Market Day, and this opportunity was utilised to impress the neighbourhood, the prisoners being marched through the main street and Market Place to the lock-up. A conference was held with Colonel Portal, who commanded a neighbouring Column and as a result he kindly agreed to take over the duty of visiting an awkward angle of the Area belonging to No. 2. This was a great help, as orders had just been received from Irish Command that the four Columns were to be broken up on May 26th, and it was consequently very necessary to cover the remainder of the unvisited country as quickly as possible.

"D" Company under Captain Oates, M.C., entrained for Roscrea on May 19th, and having searched the house of a disloyal J.P., moved on to Birr and Portumna on successive days.

On the 23rd they marched to Killimor and wound up their tour at Loughrea on 24th.

"A" Company under Captain Dimock on their return from the Scariff Expedition entrained for Nenagh

and thence did four marches on consecutive days, halting at Borrisokane, Burr, Banagher and finally arriving at Ballinasloe on May 25th. Headquarters had remained at Killaloe the more easily to keep touch with both Companies as well as the Cavalry, who were scouring the country in the direction of Woodford and Scariff with Gort as a centre.

The Armoured Car stayed at Killaloe, and the Gun Detachment returned to Athlone.

On May 25th the two Companies of the 2/8th concentrated at Ballinasloe, Headquarters arriving there on the previous day, whilst the Cavalry went back to the Curragh.

The men had had a lot of hard marching, but looked very fit on their arrival, and received a very warm welcome from the people of Ballinasloe.

Arrival of the Mascot. Sir Francis Synge, Bart., had very kindly expressed a desire to present the Battalion with a very beautiful Irish Wolfhound as a remembrance of the good work it had done in Ireland, and on May 26th the C.O. accompanied by Captain Dimock motored over to Birr to fetch him. The dog had never been on a lead before, the motor was an open one, so that the expedition was not without incident, and resolved itself into a wrestling match between Captain Dimock and the dog, which terminated in the man sitting on the dog!

Not to be outdone by Sir F. Synge's generosity the ladies of the town and district of Ballinasloe decided to entertain Officers, Warrant Officers, N.C.O.'s and men in the Show Ground, and an impromptu programme of Athletic Sports was arranged. Unfortunately the weather spoilt the Sports, but not the tea, which was dispensed with true Irish hospitality and thoroughly enjoyed, and the kind thought which prompted it was greatly appreciated by all.

On May 27th we bade a regretful good-bye to Ballinasloe, little thinking that it was only a case of "*au revoir*," and that we should shortly see our good friends

again. Ballinasloe had set a good example to the rest of Ireland, and had furnished a contingent of 400 men towards the Imperial forces, out of a population of 3,000.

No. 2 Column had thus finished its work, 72 disaffected persons had been arrested, and a quantity of Arms and ammunition unearthed. Better still all outward signs of Rebellion had been crushed, and there is no doubt that if a firm but just policy had been consistently followed all further trouble would have been at an end, but alas history was to repeat itself, and hardly had the different Columns been disbanded than Officers and men, who had worked so hard, had the mortification of hearing that some of the prisoners who had been tried and sentenced were to be released, and no great interval elapsed before these men returned to Ireland, hailed as heroes and wearing Sinn Fein Badges! Further comment is needless.

Arrival at the Curragh. On arrival at the Curragh, the Battalion detrained at the Racecourse siding and marched up to Hare Park Huts, where they were very comfortably quartered.



DUNLAVIN BIVOUAC.



GLEN IMAAL. CROSSING A STREAM.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CURRAGH AND FALTIA.

The Lines were unfortunately rather far away from the centre of things, namely the Cricket Ground, Tennis Courts, and Golf Links, but before long we had a passable Cricket Ground of our own, and there was plenty of room for recreation for the men. " B " and " C " Companies rejoined the Battalion from Athlone on May 29th, and it was not long before the Battalion was hard at it from a training point of view.

Not far away were quartered the 5th Munsters, a Battalion of the Commanding Officer's old Regiment, and he speedily had the pleasure of meeting several senior Warrant and Non-Commissioned Officers who had served with him at the Curragh twenty-two years ago.

From the first Officers and other ranks went out of their way to help the 2/8th, and in a very short time the two Battalions were fast friends.

There was never a Guest Night at the Munsters without the presence of several 2/8th Officers, and the excellence of their Mess and its economical management came as a revelation to all of us.

The Battalion was commanded by Colonel Williamson, a distinguished Officer just home from France. He had had the satisfaction of seeing the men of his Battalion (the 8th Munsters) raid the German Trenches and bring back the lying placards, which the Boche had placed there, accusing British soldiers of murdering Irish women and children. His Majesty the King had quite

recently graciously summoned him to Buckingham Palace to give an account of the fine performance of his Battalion.

The weather during June was at its worst and there was rarely a day without rain, and as there was little shelter, training was not carried on under the happiest conditions, and the 2/5th who were under canvas close to us had rather a bad time of it.

“Surrender of the Austrian Army.” On June 18th one of the most extraordinary occurrences took place which it has ever been the writer's lot to witness. At about 9.30 p.m. there

was a sudden burst of cheering from the men's lines, and the C.O.'s orderly burst into the Officers' Mess asking to see the C.O. at once. He appeared greatly excited and stated that he had just come from the Post Office, where he had seen a telegram posted up saying that the Austrian Army had surrendered.

It was obviously some silly mistake, but the man certainly believed that he was speaking the truth, and the men of the Battalion did also. They had all been in bed in their shirts, but in a few seconds the Parade Ground in front of the Officers' Mess was crowded with semi-naked figures, dancing and “mafficking” in the wildest possible manner. A Union Jack had been secured from somewhere, the Band Room had been stormed, and the most noisy instruments taken therefrom. With this material a procession was formed and various patriotic songs sung.

The 2/5th close at hand were determined not to be out of it, and evading their N.C.O.'s were speedily on the scene, and in less than five minutes there must have been 1000 men on the green in front of the Officers' Mess.

Evidently anxious that their Officers should participate in the frolic, the whole crowd bore down on the Officers' Mess shouting and cheering.

It was getting dark and the affair had gone far enough, and as the presence of the N.C.O.'s did not

appear to be conspicuous, the Commanding Officer went out to see the men.

They appeared quite pleased to see him, and much amused when he brandished a hunting crop and informed them that he was shortly handing it to the Battalion Sergeant Major, with orders to use it freely on anyone out of bed in two minutes time.

There was a shout of laughter and a hurried race back to bed, the parade ground being completely deserted within the specified time. We never got a clear explanation of the cause of this ridiculous mistake, and the writer mentions the affair at length as it was the only occasion, during the 3 years in which he had the honour to Command the Battalion, when its discipline broke down.

Next day the Brigade commenced its course of musketry on the Little Curragh, and as it had been decided that the Cup kindly presented by Colonel Wright Bemrose should be awarded to the Battalion with the best figure of merit, great keenness was shown throughout the course. The 2/6th had the services of Lieut. Douglas, an old Army Eight man, and deservedly gained first place, but the 2/8th shot well, especially at the Rapid Practices, in these being ahead of the other Battalions in the Brigade.

Inspection On July 6th the Battalion was inspected by General Chapman, the Inspector of Infantry for Ireland. The men did well especially in musketry, and it was one of those rare occasions, at similar functions, when all went well, nobody getting seriously annoyed.

Sealed Orders. At 2.15 p.m. on July 11th, Lieut.-Colonel Oates was informed that orders had just come through from Irish Command to the effect that he was to proceed to the South with a Battalion of the 59th Division. Further that the first train would leave at 4 p.m. and that sealed orders would be handed to him before departure. He begged to be allowed to take his own Battalion and this request was granted.

Some idea of the difficulty of carrying out the order up to time may be realised, when it is stated that the 2/8th Transport which had to accompany the Battalion was at that time in Newbridge, 3 miles away. The difficulty however was overcome, as were most difficulties, by the Battalion.

It was arranged that Motor lorries, assisted by the 2/5th Transport should at once get Ammunition, Rations, and Blankets down to the Curragh siding where the Battalion was to entrain, and which was a march of about 30 minutes from the Lines.

The Officers call was sounded, orders given, and a despatch rider sent off at a gallop to Newbridge, with the result that 3 Companies with their rations, Lewis guns and ammunition were entrained in the first train by 3.58 p.m. The 2nd train left shortly afterwards with the last Company and the Tents, as it transpired that we were going under canvas.

Captain W. N. Wright had worked wonders, and never were horses and wagons more quickly entrained than by him and his Transport men.

The Brigade Major (Major Goodman) had unwisely made a bet with Captain Wright that he could not entrain his transport in twenty minutes. It was done, horses, wagons and all in fifteen!

As the Battalion marched off Colonel Gorton (G.S.I. 59th Division) handed to Colonel Oates some sealed orders, which were not to be opened until the train started, though a verbal communication as to the nature of the service had been made.

Athlone again. It soon became known that Athlone was our first objective, and the first train steamed in to the Station at 7.30 p.m., the second following about 9 p.m. Everyone was delighted to meet our old friends, the Artillery again. As usual everything was done for the comfort of the Officers and men, fatigue parties were at the station to help in unloading the baggage, and quarters were supplied where all ranks

could get a brief sleep before starting on the serious work before them.

Our friend Colonel Clayton and others of the Police Force had arrived and put us fully *au courant* with the local situation. Cattle driving had been taking place on a very large scale at Faltia, a farm about 7 miles from Ballinasloe.

The trouble arose owing to the fact that Mr. Mather, the owner of the estate, having been obliged unexpectedly to give up a farm of which he was the tenant, found himself with 29 milking cows on his hands with nowhere to put them. Under these circumstances he had informed some tenants of his who rented his water-meadows down by the River Shannon, that he must dispossess them, but that he could offer them an equivalent amount of grass elsewhere of equally good quality, situated on the estate, at no great distance, at a reasonable rent.

The tenants had held the water-meadows for very many years, and resented disturbance, and as a result of this feeling, Cattle driving followed the eviction of the tenants.

It had been on a pretty big scale, no less than 1200 head of mixed cattle, sheep and horses being driven across country by a large collection of sympathisers with the evicted tenants. The cattle drivers were well organised being drawn from the four neighbouring Counties, and during the third of their operations had come into collision with the Royal Irish Constabulary, 60 strong.

A stand up battle ensued in which the police, although they fought gallantly, were largely outnumbered and defeated. Flushed with triumph the marauders scattered the stock to the four winds, and it took many days before the bulk of them were collected and brought back. Many of the cattle were badly injured and sheep had their legs broken. The chief nuisance in cattle driving lies in the fact that the sheep having once been driven across country, get into the way of jumping even stone

walls when separated from their lambs, many broken limbs being the result.

The Commanding Officer decided to march at 3 a.m., as the distance to Faltia House was 14 miles and he was anxious to arrive there just before 8 a.m., which was the hour selected for a Drive on a larger scale than any which had hitherto taken place.

According to the information supplied by the police, 4,000 men were to be mustered and all authority was to be defied, the cattle drivers being, it was understood, in many cases armed.

At 2 a.m., all ranks had, thanks to the Cooks of the Royal Artillery, an excellent hot meal and the Advance Guard with 2 R.I.C. guides marched out of Barracks punctually at 3 a.m., followed by their Transport, protected by a small rear guard. Soon after starting rain came down in torrents, a searching rain such as one only sees in Ireland and Scotland, and in an hour it had penetrated through Burberrys and the men's waterproof sheets. It was very cold as well, the discomfort being accentuated by the fact that many of the Battalion had recently been vaccinated, and Captain Horton-Date, our M.O., never did things by halves! Amongst the victims, most unfortunately for all concerned, was the C.O., and it is on record that one blameless young Officer, who had never previously received a dressing down, got it with interest at Faltia!

Everything however comes to an end, even the most unpleasant state of affairs, and the Battalion reached a place called America on the Map, which they were informed was their Camping Ground.

The prospect was not inviting. A rain-soaked field, with long grass, no shelter and every prospect of a continuance of the present conditions.

It was just 7.30 a.m. The first thing to be done was to reconnoitre the ground and post picquets to prevent a surprise. This having been done a fire was got going in a ruined cottage and the men given some hot tea.

Faltia House was less than half a mile away, our Camp being between the Meadows in dispute and the House.

By 8.30 a.m., it became clear that news of our expected arrival had reached the countryside, as there was no sign of the Cattle drivers, so the Battalion set to work to make itself as comfortable as circumstances permitted.

Unfortunately some of the Tents had not arrived, and it became necessary to house some of the men elsewhere.

Arrival at Faltia. Accordingly "A" Company under Captain Dimock marched off to Faltia House, where they were accommodated in some barns, the Commanding Officer and Battalion Headquarters, following in order to keep an eye on them.

"D" Company occupied the National School, which had been requisitioned as a temporary measure, until the missing tents arrived.

Luckily for all ranks the rain cleared off, and a very tolerable camp had been pitched and trenched by afternoon.

In the evening Colonel Clayton and Mr. Tyrrell, County Inspectors of Police of Galway and Roscommon, came to see Lieut.-Colonel Oates with a view to placing him fully in possession of the local state of affairs.

It appeared that the public house at Ballydangan was the Headquarters of all the trouble, and that mobilisation orders, etc., all emanated from there.

The Proprietor was a County Councillor, no unusual thing in Ireland, and his son, who owned a motor cycle, was utilised as despatch rider to mobilise the Cattle raiding Forces. In addition there was the son-in-law, a thirsty individual who was disposed to be quarrelsome.

These were the Villains of the Piece.

Early next morning the Battalion accompanied by Mr. Tyrrell, the Chief Inspector for Roscommon,

marched to Ballydangan, being guided by two of the Royal Irish Constabulary.

Lieut. Moffatt was sent on ahead with a small party to surround the public house, deny egress to all the occupants, and to seize the motor cycle if it could be found.

On the arrival of the Battalion, Mr. Moffatt complained that he had been seriously impeded in carrying out his duties by John Naughton, who had advised the men in the public house to burn the motor cycle rather than allow it to fall into the hands of the Military.

As this individual continued to hamper the Military, the C.O. ordered his arrest, and he was taken back to the Guard Tent, at a more rapid pace than he was accustomed, where the deprivation of his pipe and tobacco, and enforced abstinence from alcohol speedily reduced him to a less bellicose frame of mind.

Meanwhile closing restrictions were placed on the Public House, the occupants being confined to the premises, whilst Lieut. Hewitt and a picket of 50 men were left to see that these orders were strictly enforced. The motor cycle was temporarily confiscated.

In the afternoon Devenish Island, on the Shannon, was visited, the men of the Battalion assisting in forcing 42 cattle, belonging to Mr. Mather, to swim the arm of the river to the pasturage on the Island.

On the next morning, July 14th, the more difficult process of swimming a number of sheep across to the Island was put into force. The process adopted was to row a boat across, a man sitting in the stern pulling an old ewe after the boat by a rope attached to her neck; then after the party had got some ten yards from the bank, a number of the sheep were hustled down the bank into the water. The plan worked pretty well, as the different droves, once in the water struck out after the swimming ewe. Occasionally, however, the leader of the following sheep would lose its nerve and turn back, and when this happened those behind invariably followed, and nothing would induce them afterwards to face the

crossing. The men worked willingly, 170 sheep being safely swum across to the island that morning. One or two were drowned, but I was informed that this frequently happens.

Mr. Mather was very grateful to the troops, as he pointed out that the stock taken across would easily eat up the grass on the island in a week, and the plans of the Cattle Drivers to deprive him of his pasture be thwarted.

There were a few scouts on the opposite bank of the river, but no opposition was offered, and the presence of a police picquet, overlooking the island and its approaches made interference either by day or night difficult.

On the following day the Battalion marched to Rath-peeke, then on to Coolderry, Ballydangan and home, as a demonstration.

Lieut. Hewitt was visited, and obviously had complete charge of the situation—"the grate blue pishtol of him"—a very new automatic which he had recently purchased, obviously commanding the deepest respect. Had the populace been aware that the weapon was loaded and that Lieut. Hewitt was "not used to the mechanism," their respect would have been greatly accentuated.

"A" Company had greatly enjoyed themselves at Faltia House, but they were becoming rather too absent-minded to please the C.O.

Immunity from detection had resulted in a decrease of the live stock at the farm at a rate beyond the bounds of decency, so they were sent back to Camp, where more tents had arrived, and where there was less cover to conceal their delinquencies.

By Sunday, July 16th, or 4 days after the arrival of the Battalion, a settlement of the Cattle driving trouble was reached, the evicted tenants agreeing to offer no opposition to the peaceful occupation of the pastures by the owner, whilst the latter agreed to reinstate them the following year, by which time he hoped to obtain sufficient accommodation elsewhere for his stock.

The agreement was signed without delay by both parties, and Lieut.-Colonel Oates was able to report to

the Commander-in-Chief that the trouble was over and not likely to recur.

The Chief Inspector came and thanked the C.O. very generously for the assistance of the troops, and added that he considered that the prompt settlement of the affair was entirely due to his prompt and firm action at Ballydangan on the day after his arrival.

It was decided, on the advice of the Chief Inspector to remove the 2/8th picquet from Ballydangan, and to allow the inhabitants of the district to partake of their favourite beverage once more.

The picquet took an almost tearful farewell of the "Pub" and its inhabitants, the ladies loudly declaring that the 2/8th were thorough gentlemen, especially the Officer with the "grate blue pisthol."

After this the lines of the Battalion were cast in very pleasant places, and the girls of the country side were only too pleased to show to the men the beauties of the district.

Although order had been entirely restored the Commander-in-Chief informed the C.O. that he wished the Battalion to stay some time longer at Faltia, sending reports up to Dublin at intervals as to the state of feeling between the contending parties, and the local attitude to the troops. Fortunately Colonel Oates was able to give very satisfactory replies on both points.

Meanwhile we were having a very pleasant time; the weather was warm and delightful, and the people round hospitable.

Many were the kindnesses received by all ranks from Mr. and Mrs. Potts at Coreen Castle. Not content with repeatedly asking numbers of Officers to their house they entertained Warrant Officers, N.C.O.'s and men as well, and one wondered at the necessity of the police protection, which had been given continuously for eight years, for a family whom everyone seemed to like.

On July 19th an old acquaintance, in the shape of Mr. Beirne, the R.M. at Athlone, came to see us, and to satisfy himself as to the state of affairs.

Short route marches and training to a limited extent was the order of the day, specialist work such as Lewis Gun Training, signalling and Fire orders being most in evidence. We were fortunate in having a perfect landscape target unfolded below us, and it proved a very great advantage to the young N.C.O.'s.

Towards the end of the second week, the weather being warm, it was decided to dam up a small stream in order to construct a bathing place for the Battalion and Police; after this bathing parades took place daily, and football matches, tugs-of-war, quoits, etc., were arranged every evening, so that there was plenty of occupation for the men.

The Battalion had had a very long spell of severe training, and the C.O. determined to give them what practically amounted to 3 weeks rest. He never regretted it, and a finer, healthier or happier set of men never marched into the Curragh than the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters.

We were shortly to receive a fresh shock in the shape of orders for the whole of our Trained Machine Gunners to proceed to France. There was a double sting in the order, as not only did it deprive us of our best instructors for Lewis gun work, but it removed two of our best backs and dealt to the Battalion Football team a knock-out blow.

However, orders had to be obeyed, but there was some consolation in the fact that Officers were not to go.

All ranks had received so much kindness from the people round that it was determined to make an effort to return it.

Mr. Mather very kindly placed his house and grounds at the disposal of the Battalion, and invitations were issued and accepted for July 26th.

The programme started with Athletic Sports and ended with Football, in both of which the Royal Irish Constabulary competed. Naturally the 2/8th were a bit too clever for their opponents at Football, but the weight of the R.I.C. told at the Tug-of-War.

The Band played its very best, and gave a delightful programme, greatly appreciated by the guests, and Mrs. Clayton wound up a successful afternoon by kindly presenting the prizes.

On the following night the R.I.C. carried out a raid in the neighbourhood, effecting 23 arrests of men implicated in the recent trouble.

The 2/8th Sherwood Foresters had 150 men under Arms all night, in order to render any assistance that might be necessary; everything however passed off quietly and their help was not called for.

No further trouble was experienced, the weather was delightful, and the afternoons were generally spent in organising amusements of various kinds for the men, whilst several of the Officers fished in the River Shannon, and availed themselves of invitations to shoot Duck and Snipe.

On August 2nd the Battalion lost the valuable services of Captain Horton-Date, our M.O., who was transferred elsewhere. His services had been greatly valued by all ranks, and he was deservedly popular. The Officers presented him with a very handsome suitcase, as a mark of their esteem.

He was succeeded by Capt. T. S. Elliott, R.A.M.C., a native of Southwell, and well known to a number of Officers and men in the Battalion.

On August 7th it was decided to strike Camp, and risk the possibility of rain, as it was very important to get the tents into Ballinasloe dry, as we had to take them with us to the Curragh and were dependent on them on arrival.

The day was spent in playing off the Finals of the Tug-of-War and platoon football matches, in which "D" Company proved most successful. Officers and men bivouaced in the open, and it was fortunately a lovely night.

Departure Faltia was left regretfully at 7 a.m.,
from Faltia. the men resting at Ballinasloe, and obtaining a good meal before entraining.

We had had much difficulty in the matter of supply, the weather being abnormally hot, and matters were not made easier by the A.S.C. sending in 4 days rations at once, although they had been informed of the date of our move. A considerable portion of the meat was in a doubtful condition, not in the opinion of the Board bad enough to condemn, but in such a state that given unfavourable weather it might go bad before next day.

As it was impossible to return it, it was taken up to the Curragh and was found that night to be in a putrid condition.

An attempt was made to hold the Battalion responsible, but our Brigadier having expressed himself very strongly in our favour no more was heard of the matter.

On arrival at the Curragh, Camp was duly pitched and all made comfortable.

Next day the Battalion continued its musketry course, which had been interrupted by the recent move.

Move to French Furze Camp. On August 12th we moved into French Furze Camp, which had recently been evacuated by the Cadet Battalion. The Lines were very comfortable, the huts being of wood, and much warmer and less draughty than those at Hare Park. There was a capital Officers' Mess, which was soon nicely decorated by a display of stags heads, foxes' masks, brushes and pads, with other objects of interest, the property of Captain Wright. The men's lines too were good, though there was a good deal of broken glass, and new flooring was badly needed in the Cookhouses.

The Battalion however was fortunate in possessing a first class lot of pioneers under Sergeant Foulds, and this body with the efficient supervision of Major Martyn speedily put things right, whilst the Royal Engineers, finding that they were dealing with good workmen, gave us plenty of raw material to work with.

Inspection by Lord French. On August 16th the Troops at the Curragh were inspected by the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Forces, the Sherwood Forester Brigade going by splendidly in the

march past. A very complimentary order was afterwards issued by the Field Marshal. Experienced Officers however shook their heads sadly, and said that we had done too well. Alas their fears were realised all too soon, and before many days were over the Division had to give of its best in the form of very large reinforcing drafts for France.

The following week was spent in inoculating the Officers for paratyphoid, and one felt that the R.A.M.C. were treating the various diseases rather shabbily, for as soon as any new and interesting illness showed its nose it was promptly from a medical point of view sat upon!

Young Officers liked it well enough, as they got 2 days in bed, and immunity from "Orderly Dog," but it was a more serious matter for the older men, who had to do a certain amount of work and pretend to check returns calculated to turn the hair grey even when in a state of robust health.

Glen Imaal. Field firing of an advanced type had now commenced, the Battalions of the Brigade marching some 20 miles, in rotation, to Glen Imaal, a very beautiful little estate in the Wicklow Hills, which had been purchased by the Government as an Artillery Range.

The turn of the 2/8th came on August 26th, on which date the Battalion marched to Dunlavin, a distance of 13 miles. As there was no accommodation, all ranks bivouaced in a field reserved for the purpose on the hill-side. Fortunately rain held off, and the halt gave the men a much needed opportunity of practicing the laying out of a bivouac camp, using their rifles as poles, and making their blankets into *tents d'abris*.

Glen Imaal was reached next day, and everyone was fascinated by its charming aspect.

Leitrim Castle, facing South, looked out on an amphitheatre of hills, and the varying colours brought out by sunshine after rain delighted us all.

Unfortunately there was too little sun and too much rain, and we were unlucky from a weather point of view as compared with the rest of the Brigade.

Individual Field Firing commenced on Monday, August 28th, but only a few rounds had been fired when an official memorandum arrived from the Curragh with the information that the 2/8th and other Battalions had each to find drafts of 200 men for France.

Another Draft. This was a facer indeed as all ranks had been buoyed up with the hope that there would be an early move of the 59th Division to France.

The Adjutant was promptly sent in to the Curragh to start the necessary arrangements, whilst the Battalion commenced its march back there on the following day.

A halt as before was made at Dunlavin, and as it was now glorious weather we were very comfortable in our bivouacs. Several of the younger Officers became a little frolicsome after Mess, empty bivouacs and their possessions being raided. A good deal of quarrelling ensued over the ultimate possession of a very gaudy suit of pyjamas, the arms and legs of which had been seized by four different Officers, with the result that they all got a bit!

Breakfasts were served up at 5 a.m. next day, and the march continued at 6, the Curragh being reached at 10.35, a distance of 13 miles—not bad marching, as the roads were none too good.

The next few days were spent in fitting the Draft out, preparing documents, etc., and so quickly was the work done that all was ready for the inspection of the G.O.C., the Division on September 2nd.

The turn out was an especially good one, and when they marched off to the Curragh siding at 9.15 p.m., the 2/8th Draft were all present and decidedly pleased with themselves.

Return to Glen Imaal. A fortnight was allowed for reorganisation, and then the Battalion received orders to march back to Glen Imaal and complete their field firing. The first two days were taken up in completing individual practices and getting ready for a big show in which the Battalion was to take part.

Dress Rehearsal This was practically a Dress Rehearsal for France. Much labour had been expended by working parties in preparing some very fairly realistic copies of a series of Enemy Trenches on the hillside. The ground was very suitable and it was decided to give the Divisional Artillery some practise also.

Three Batteries R.F.A., after duly registering on trenches called by the familiar names of "Big and Little Willie," gave these trenches half an hour's pounding, the Assembly Trenches being occupied by the first two waves of the Attacking Force, consisting of "D" Company 2/8th Sherwood Foresters, the remainder of the Battalion being temporarily further back, until the bombardment ceased, when they took their place in the operations.

The exercise was made more interesting by an intensive Trench Mortar Bombardment lasting five minutes, and on its conclusion the leading wave moved forward from the tape on which they had formed up.

The Advance was made in eight waves on a Frontage of 200 yards, the waves being about 100 yards apart, all ranks being dressed in Fighting order.

Ladders were used to assist the men in climbing quickly out of the trenches, and the attack was helped by covering fire from Machine Guns, and the Battalion snipers, both being posted in peat bogs on the right flank of the Battalion.

The Machine Gun Detachment had orders to move up to the new positions when captured. Imaginary troops were attacking the enemy positions on both flanks of the Battalion.

Strong points and machine gun positions had been located, and special parties told off to deal with them, whilst Detachments of Lewis gunners had some excellent practise in assisting these troops in their task, working up the Ravine formed by a small stream and bringing oblique fire to bear on the different objectives. The leading waves had orders to move forward to the furthest

objectives, viz., the different Trenches constituting the " Little Willie " system, and consolidating these immediately they were captured, whilst the 2/5th Sherwoods were told off to mop up " Big Willie," and construct strong points there. This Battalion and the 2/6th Sherwood Foresters had also to detail carrying parties for bringing up S.A.A. and R.E. Stores.

The several specialists of the Battalion such as Runners, Wire Cutters, Stretcher Bearers, etc., all wore distinguishing Badges, and much emphasis was laid on the necessity for the rapid conveyance of information back from the Line to Battalion and Brigade Headquarters.

Positions were also selected for First Aid Posts, the various Dumps, and Battle Police. In fact all Details had been carefully thought out previously.

The exercise was witnessed by Major General Sandbach, who commanded the 59th Division, Brigadier General Maconchy, and several of the Headquarter Staff from Dublin, including Major General Chapman, the Inspector of Infantry, and the Commandant of the School of Musketry from Dollymount.

All went well, and for once in a way there was practically no adverse criticism. The Battalion Runners especially distinguished themselves, bringing their messages back very speedily over the top—a practise which they continued greatly to their credit in France.

In the " Pow-wow " at the conclusion of operations, the work of the Battalion was very favourably commented on, though it was pointed out that more practise in Consolidation was required.

Everyone was obviously relieved when it was all over. Field Firing is generally a ticklish job, even when Infantry only are firing, but it is greatly complicated when other arms are co-operating.

Next day all Camp Equipment, etc., was handed in to the Authorities, and the Battalion marched to Dunlavin, where they were billeted in very comfortable quarters for the night.

A Field Day with the rest of the Brigade had been arranged for next day, September 22nd, and most of us thought it a "bit stiff" as we had had a rough time at Glen Imaal, the weather being most unpleasant. In accordance with orders received over night the Battalion marched off at 7 a.m., taking up a defensive position near Mount Crawley at 11.30 a.m.

The Attack was made by the 2/5th and 2/6th Sherwood Foresters, and thanks to the excellent information sent back to the Commanding Officer, it completely failed, both the attacking Battalions being committed to the assault on a position which proved to be unoccupied, and being in the opinion of the Chief Umpire enfiladed and practically annihilated.

Thus ended three very hard days work, days, however, which had proved successful and useful to all Ranks, who were only too glad to regain the shelter of the Curragh huts at 4 p.m.

On September 27th a signalling scheme was organised, mainly for exercising senior Officers in the orders necessary for the movement of Troops. Brigadier General Gloster came up to command the (skeleton) 176th Brigade, and Lieut. Colonel Oates, with Captain Langford as his Brigade Major commanded the 177th Brigade (also skeleton). Some very useful practise was obtained both by the Staff as well as by Brigade and Battalion Signallers.

Winter was now approaching, so it was decided to put each Battalion through an intense form of Company Training, a wise proceeding, as it gave Company Commanders a good opportunity of looking for weak spots, and getting to know the new men recently sent out to fill up the gap caused by the drafts despatched to France.

Amusements too were very necessary for the men, but unfortunately the Curragh does not shine in this respect, there being no town, whilst Newbridge and Kildare are little more than villages and dirty at that.

The best of a bad job however was made by instituting a system of Brigade and Divisional Football

matches, the former on the League system and the latter on that usually adopted for Cup Ties. These games were capital fun to watch, and not infrequently led to pretty strong feeling between Battalions and even Companies. Moreover they kept the men occupied.

This was very necessary, as both Officers and men had long felt that they were fit for France, and were beginning to get stale and weary with the long wait to which they were subjected.

Officers were better off, as there was capital hunting to be had close at hand with the Kildare Hounds, and Captain Wright our Transport Officer, and a keen hunting man, was in his element. He had the very laudable ambition to teach all the 2/8th Officers to ride, rather inconsiderately suggesting that, as most of the Senior Officers would be killed, there was no knowing how soon the Juniors might have to be mounted! So he came with a twinkle in his eye to ask the C.O. for leave to start a class. Permission being readily accorded a Riding School for Officers commenced forthwith, and some of the Juniors, particularly the Scottish Officers, who were not experts, had a pretty bad time.

In due course the Transport Officer, anxious to demonstrate the progress made by his pupils, decided that the time had come for them to ride on the open Curragh. Here alas there were no hedges or other boundaries to keep a horse straight, save his rider's legs and hands.

The prospect was obviously viewed with alarm by some of the pupils, but "teacher" was adamant. It was decided that two bosom friends Lieuts. Hewitt and Mackinnon should open the ball, speculation being rife as to whether the intimacy extended to their mounts.

Aided by the spectators they started at a promising pace, which was soon accelerated, but the steeds determined obviously against the wishes of their riders to go different ways.

Mr. Hewitt and his mount sought the pastures of the Little Curragh, whilst Mr. Mackinnon's mount conveyed him rapidly back to the stables!

Concerts for the men were of daily occurrence, and the Battalion was fortunate in getting one or two real artists. Privates Saville and Tolhurst singing really well and obviously delighting their audiences.

During November a very interesting lecture on orientation was given by Colonel Tilney, and as a result a large number of copies of his book on the stars were purchased for use in the Battalion. Unfortunately it was a science that had to be studied regularly, as a retentive memory as to the time and date on which certain stars appear is essential. Given this, study of the stars may assist many a lost soldier to find his way safely back to his own lines.

On November 11th the Battalion received a draft of 80 men from Worcestershire and Somerset. They were all very young, but likely to prove useful soldiers.

On December 3rd came the welcome news that the Division was shortly to move to Salisbury Plain, always a sign that active service is fairly imminent. All ranks were naturally delighted.

Inspection by Hythe Commandant. Close on the heels of this news came an Inspection by Colonel McMahon, the Hythe Commandant. It was obviously of great importance for the Battalion to do well, and fortunately much time during the Autumn had been spent in the excellent miniature Range at our disposal, in Recognition of Targets and the various Fire Control exercises.

The men did splendidly, as usually happened when they were asked to make a special effort, and the Report which was received later proved most satisfactory.

The year closed with a good deal of Specialist training, advantage being taken of a slack time to put all Officers through a short course of firing the Lewis gun,

whilst the last joined recruits completed their musketry.

One of these, Private Loweth, did some phenomenal shooting, scoring 64 out of a possible 65 on the first day, and ending up with a total of 139, which would probably have been considerably augmented but for a typical Curragh "fish tail" wind at the longer ranges. The score however was good enough to make him the best shot in the Battalion.

Major Martyn, who had recently returned from a Senior Officers Course at Aldershot, was definitely selected as 2nd in Command of the Battalion, but greatly to his surprise, received an order from the War Office to join a Battalion of the York and Lancaster Regiment in that capacity. The news was a great blow to the Battalion, as Major Martyn was intimately connected with the administrative work and exceedingly popular with all ranks. Orders however had to be obeyed, and he left us on January 6th for his new Battalion. The Divisional General however had no intention of taking the order "lying down," and went himself to the War Office to see what could be done.

Move to On January 12th, 1917, the Battalion said
England. good-bye to Ireland, leaving the Curragh at 6.15 p.m., and arriving at Holyhead about midnight. The crossing was a bad one even for the Irish Channel, and nearly everyone was ill, but too happy to mind the temporary discomfort.

CHAPTER VII.

FOYANT.

We had a long and weary wait at Holyhead, always a depressing spot, though more so when proceeding to Ireland than when on the return journey.

Fovant was not reached until 7.30 p.m. next day, but our eyes were gladdened by the sight of Major Martyn who had been permitted to return to us.

Fortunately the night was fine, as it was a very tired Battalion which reached West Farm Camp at 8.15 p.m. The next day was spent in tidying up the Camp, which had not been left too clean by our predecessors. Situated on rising ground, which sloped down to the roadway, it had a very pleasant aspect, and if the walls of the huts were terribly thin and draughty, none of us were in a mood to find fault. That afternoon we were visited by Generals Sandbach and Maconchy who appeared well satisfied with the move.

Inspection by On January 16th the Battalion was
Sir H. Sclater. inspected by Sir H. Sclater, who held the Southern Command. It was quite an informal affair, the General merely watching the work being done by the different companies. The Brigadier informed us that we were to proceed to France in about a month. The weather at this time was bitterly cold, and all ranks suffered from the change from the comparatively mild climate of County Kildare. The training ground was poor, and we all felt our detention in England to be rather a waste of time, but all things have an end and when on January 23rd news came through that embarkation leave was to commence at once, the move to France at last appeared a reality.



SOME OFFICERS OF THE BATTALION AT THE CURRAGH.



NO. 13 PLATOON MARCHING PAST LORD FRENCH.

On the 25th the long withheld list of honours for the operations in Ireland was published, the Battalion at last receiving its due.

Captain Quibell received a well earned D.S.O., Major Martyn and Captain Hewitt the Military Cross, whilst D.C.M.'s were given to Battalion Sergt.-Major Lacey, Sergt.-Major King, Band Sergt. Cooper, and Corporal Walker.

In addition the Commanding Officer, Captain J. S. C. Oates, M.C., Lieutenant Daffen and Sergt.-Major Dixey were mentioned in despatches, the mention to count as being of equal Rank with a mention for service overseas.

There was much rejoicing and drinking of healths that night.

Inspection by Sir F. Howard. On January 30th the very critical inspection by the Inspector of Infantry for the Southern Command took place. It could scarcely have been fixed on a less auspicious date, as a large number of men, practically half the Battalion, had left for Embarkation leave on the previous evening, whilst those who had previously gone on leave were due to return at 2 a.m. that morning. Could anything be more hopeless! Old Soldiers will understand what the writer means.

However an effort had to be made, so the Battalion Sergt.-Major was given *carte blanche*.

This meant a longish parade before breakfast, at which words of command succeeded each other with such rapidity that half the Battalion were wide awake and the remainder actively ill!

As usual they put up quite a good show before the Inspecting General, an old Rifle Brigade Officer, who appreciated smartness, and was very complimentary on the Discipline and Drill of the Battalion.

Bitter weather followed the Inspection, and for several days the Thermometer registered over 20 degrees of frost. The writer has experienced plenty of cold, has for weeks together slept on the ground and in the open

with 14 degrees of frost, but he has never felt the cold so much as during the late Winter and Spring of 1917.

The huts at Fovant were terribly thin and draughty, so that practically everyone suffered from severe colds. Life in a comfortable dug-out is luxury as compared with existence in a draughty hut.

Service in On February 11th a special service was
Salisbury held for the Sherwood Forester Brigade.
Cathedral. Five hundred men selected from each

Battalion travelled by special trains to and from Salisbury to hear a fine sermon preached by the Lord Bishop of Southwell. He was well-known to many of us in the 2/8th at home in Notts., and he had frequently visited the Battalion at Luton and in other places. His advice was listened to with wrapt attention, and the beautiful service was greatly appreciated by all.

At its conclusion the four Battalions marched past the Duke of Portland, Lord Lieutenant of Notts., and the Bishop, in columns of fours, the former taking the salute.

Traffic was much disorganised during the day, and some nervous R.T.O. ordered the train conveying the 2/8th to start twenty minutes before the scheduled time. As a result the C.O. was left behind, and had to come on an engine later, and get home as best he could.

Early in the following week the Battalion was ordered to transfer 67 men to the 2/5th and 2/7th Battalions as it was over and they under strength.

It was an opportunity not to be lost, as no qualifications had been mentioned.

Needless to say the most efficient men were not discarded, but the Battalions who suffered took it like the good sportsmen they were, and merely shook their fists at us, saying "-you just wait till we have to send you some men." Unfortunately for their revenge they never had an opportunity of returning good for evil!

Inspection by Tuesday, February 13th was a proud
the King. day for the Division, as His Majesty
the King came down to Salisbury Plain
to see them. The Sherwood Forester Brigade was

ordered to march past in Column of Route, His Majesty being posted on a small Platform erected at the entrance to Fovant Village.

Luckily the day was fine and the Battalion led by its mascot "Vulcan" went by magnificently, each man obviously trying to show his Sovereign what his training had done for him, and how proud he was of his Battalion.

The Parade over, the four Commanding Officers were introduced to His Majesty, who graciously shook hands with them and thanked them for the services of their Battalions during the Rebellion in Ireland.

The recipients of Honours were then brought before the King, who pinned the various decorations on their breasts and congratulated them.

Thus ended a thoroughly successful Parade, which was followed by a whole holiday next day, a concession which was greatly appreciated.

On February 14th the Battalion was reinforced by two new Officers, 2nd Lieutenants Cooper and Wilson, the former of whom was posted to "D" Company and the latter to "B."

The ensuing week was taken up in issuing Mobilisation equipment, and practising the new form of attack. History was repeating itself, as old soldiers knew that a manœuvre of this nature would be fortunate if its details survived the month!

A really instructive Pamphlet dealing with the offensive and defensive action of a Division in modern warfare was issued about this time, and to the relief of all concerned it remained with very slight alterations a standard work for the Army.

Departure of the Mascot. Just previous to leaving England the Battalion said a sorrowful good-bye to "Vulcan." All ranks were very fond of him, and proud of his dignified deportment on occasions of ceremony.

With their usual thoughtfulness the Duke and Duchess of Portland kindly volunteered to look after him during the time the Battalion was abroad. Needless to say the dog had a right royal time at Welbeck, until the time came for him also to do his bit.

With this end in view the Duchess sent him to Major Richardson for training, and the writer was informed that he proved a very useful animal in defence work.

Move to France. On February 25th the Brigade commenced its move to France, the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters receiving orders to entrain at Railhead at 12.40 (midnight) on February 26th. The Transport of the Battalion with other details had gone on ahead under Major Martyn via Southampton and Havre, and were to meet the Battalion in the Divisional Concentration Area.

The train journey was uneventful, Folkestone being reached at 8.15 a.m. and a march to comfortable billets of $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles freshened the men up, especially as they got a wash and a good meal at the end of it.

Little time was cut to waste, the journey to France being resumed on S.S. "Arundel" at 2.15 p.m. the same day.

CHAPTER VIII.

FRANCE AT LAST.

Arrival at Boulogne was reached at 5.20 p.m., and
Boulogne. an extremely tiring up-hill march of $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles to Camp followed. Here we had our first taste of real discomfort, as some 3,000 men of various corps were encamped, and although the Camp was a standing one little headway had been made in making Troops comfortable before they moved on for concentration. It was impossible to get hot water, so tea could not be provided for the men, and one felt that at a standing camp which had been in existence at least a couple of months, more consideration might have been given to the men's comfort, especially as their short stay in the camp often preceded a tiring Railway journey, on which it was of course impossible to get hot food.

We left Camp at 7 a.m. with relief, and reached Saleux, the first halt on the journey to the point of concentration, during the afternoon. Here there was a hitch, as although we had been told that our interpreter would be awaiting us at the Station, this was not so, and worse still an exhaustive search in the village failed to find him. It was getting dark, had commenced to rain, and the mud of Saleux,—the worst the writer has ever seen—was beginning to penetrate putties and field boots when the Staff Captain of the Lincoln and Leicester Brigade was encountered. He was able to suggest the spot where the Interpreter might be slumbering, and this Official was speedily unearthed, a few words in the C.O.'s best manner thoroughly waking that gentleman up.

Battalion Headquarters were at the Chateau, a charming spot with lovely grounds, the rest of the Battalion being billeted in the long straggling village and its environs.

A much needed rest was given next day, which enabled Major Martyn to join with the Transport and details under him.

Glissy. A march of $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles brought the Battalion to Glissy, where all ranks were comfortably put up for the night. There were some excellent barns with plenty of clean straw, a fact much appreciated by the men, whilst Battalion Headquarters were located in the inevitable chateau.

Warfusée. The point of concentration was reached next day, March 3rd, the Battalion rejoining the rest of the Brigade at Warfusée, a very crowded and uncomfortable camp, with plenty of mud.

No one however minded much about this, as all ranks were delighted at the prospect of Active Service.

The next few days were taken up in practising with the New Box Respirator, a simple and effective counter to all kinds of gas, and short route marches to the River Somme, which was only two or three miles distant.

Proyart. On March 9th, the Battalion moved to Proyart, and were in Divisional Reserve, the Staffordshire with the Lincoln and Leicester Brigade being in the Line. We were to join the 4th Army under Sir H. Rawlinson, and be posted to the 3rd Corps commanded by Sir Wm. Pulteney. Here the men were very comfortable except for the presence of a plague of rats. Never has the writer seen so many; not content with using one's bed as a playground, they nibbled our noses, hair and ears, waking us up in the process.

No training worth mentioning was possible at Proyart, but Officers and men were able to get a much needed bath, though rumour has it that two young Officers unwittingly utilised one which had recently been used for dipping sheep! They came out well camouflaged, and adorned with various shades of purple.

On March 18th the Battalion moved forward to Foucaucourt, relieving the 2/5th North Staffordshire-Regiment in the huts there.

News had now come through that the Germans were retiring, and that the British Forces were to press them to the utmost.

In the Line. On March 20th the 2/8th went up to Horgny to relieve the 2/5th Leicesters in the Front Line. A very extended position had to be held, and the line was by no means completely linked up. It however gave post commanders some admirable practise in patrol work. It was a crooked one, overlooking the R. Somme, and the whole country between Foucaucourt and Horgny was a complete waste, having been the scene of the great French advance last year.

No buildings were standing, and it was almost impossible to locate the spot where the village of Estrées had once stood.

Strong evidence was forthcoming as to the accuracy of the French Artillery Fire. There was a light Railway running up the Valley close by, and at regular intervals the line had been destroyed practically beyond repair.

Another Mobile Column. Heavy snow fell whilst we were at Horgny, and it was with a feeling of relief that orders were received for the Battalion to form part of a Mobile Column, in company with "A" Battery, 295th Brigade, and 1 Troop of D.L.O. Cavalry, the whole under the Command of Lieut.-Colonel Oates.

The duties of the Commander were to act as O.C. Divisional outposts, and also to pass back quickly any news from the front, supporting the Advanced Cavalry if required.

The enemy at this time were holding the Line Roisel-Poeuilly being pressed by the Umballa Mounted Brigade, whilst the Divisional Outpost Line ran through Bias-Bois de Ceriseries-Devisé.

In the meantime 'B' and 'D' Companies with the Artillery had been moved forward to Mons-en-Chaussée, the Battery taking up a position in rear of the

village from whence it could fire unobserved on several important tactical points, such as Cross Roads etc.

In order to reach this place the R. Somme had to be crossed, and the five bridges constructed by the Sappers were severely tested. The spot chosen was Villers-Carbonel, where there were no less than five arms of the River, each of course requiring a bridge. One of the bridges did give way, an auxiliary having to be constructed at the side. The victims were a mule team pulling stores across for the Advanced Cavalry. The outpost line was a difficult one to supervise, as included in the Command were two Companies of the 61st Division, posted astride of the River Omignon. All the bridges had been destroyed, and communications were difficult in the extreme, the C.O. having to cross the River by means of a fallen tree, there being no fords in the vicinity.

On March 25th, Column H.Q., moved to Mons, whilst C. Company were detached to Estreés, to act in close support of the Cavalry Reserve stationed there, and to assist in entrenching the position occupied.

All this time the Boche was being hustled back by our Cavalry, who were finding some difficulty in keeping touch. In fact it was obvious that he was making his way rapidly back to the so called Hindenburg Line. As no counter attack was now anticipated, and a war of movement likely at any rate for some time, the small Mobile Column ceased to be of any use, especially as the front along which Divisions were advancing contracted and changed every day. In fact it was more or less of a tussle between Divisions to avoid being jostled out of the front line altogether.

Each day they received orders from the 3rd Corps to side step in order to allow fresh troops to come into the line, and we were suffering at this time—probably the only time in the War—from a plethora of men.

In accordance therefore with the situation, the Column was dissolved and the different Units joined their Formations.

The 2/8th marched to Vraignes, a pretty and well situated little village, but alas a very prominent target for the Enemy's Artillery as we were soon to find out.

Brigade Headquarters were now at Bouvincourt, the 2/7th Sherwood Foresters at Bernes, the 2/5th at Fléchin and the 2/6th at Vraignes.

The 2/6th however moved forward immediately, and on the 29th March 500 of the 2/8th were sent forward to dig cruciform posts East of Bernes and Fléchin. The work continued throughout the night, the men returning wet through but cheery at 4 a.m. next morning.

These cruciform posts, a sketch of which is shown on the next page, consist of a Traversed Trench, about 40 yards long, dug towards the enemy, and two trenches about 25 yards long off it on each side. The Bays are usually 5 or 6 yards long, and the traverses 9 to 12 feet thick.

Seven Machine Gun emplacements are constructed, and the garrison consists of 1 Officer and 25 men, with a proportion of Lewis guns.

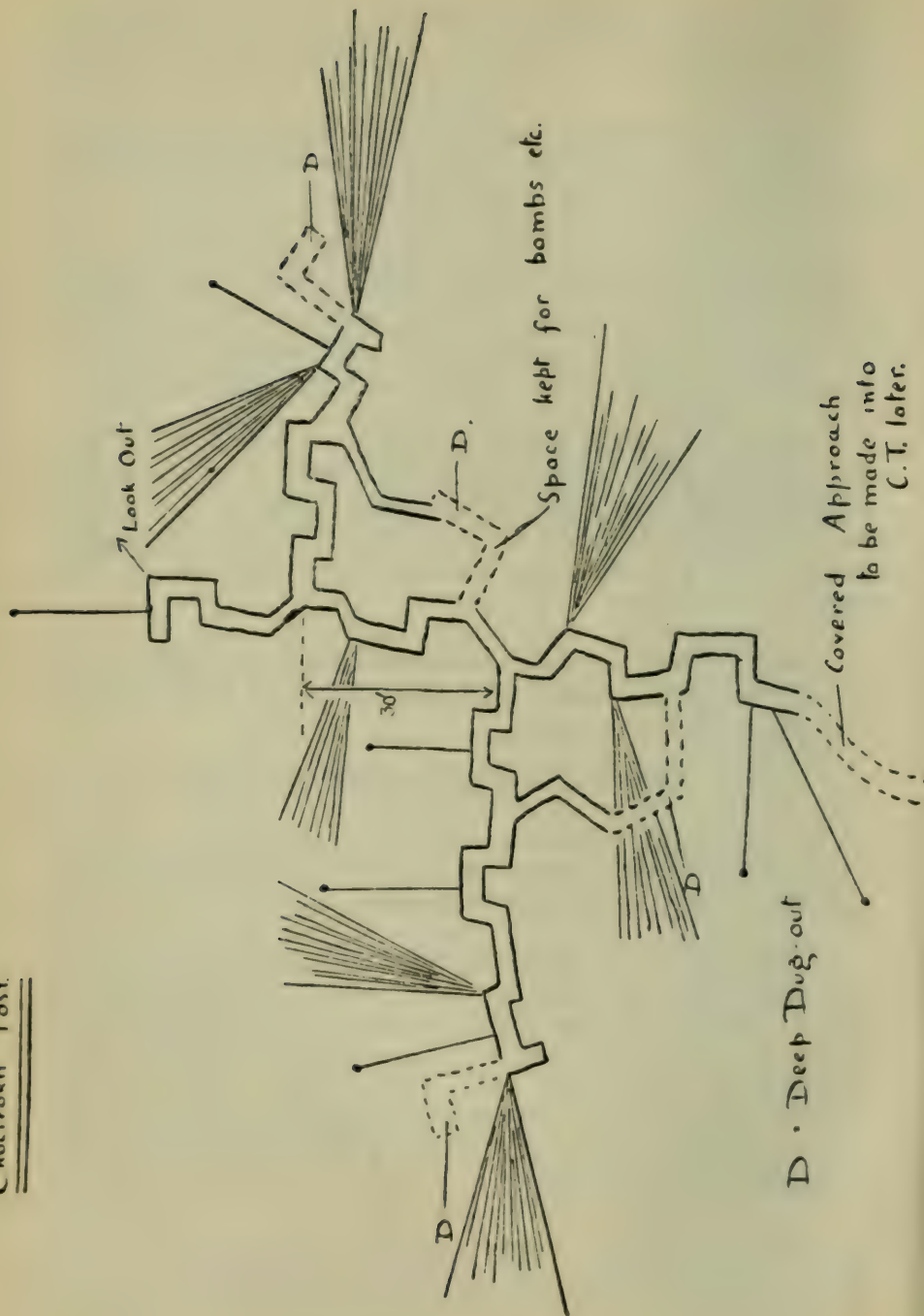
If there is time the post is wired all round.

These cruciform posts can be joined up later to form a trench system by extending the arms to form parallels, and the stem to form communication Trenches and saps.

The advantages of these posts are they are hard to hit, and easier to conceal from the sky than circular closed works. All the usual dumps are present in the posts as well as supplies of food, and dug outs are constructed for Telephone, O.C. Post, etc.; it is obvious that the effect of the flanking fire which they can bring to bear on other parts of the line which may be attacked is of the greatest value.

The village of Vraignes was shelled next day and what one may term the curiosity of the men saved several lives. It was just time for serving out the men's

CRUCIFORM POST.



**The
Destruction
of " A "
Company's
Cooker.**

dinners, but even the Company Cooks and Officers' servants went out to see the results of the shelling. It was fortunate for them that they did so, as there was a direct hit on the fore limber of " A " Company's kitchen. Bully beef was blown sky high, and a very sad lot

of orderlies paraded at the time for issuing dinners. The rest of the Battalion were greatly amused—until they were ordered to share their dinners with " A " Company.

Another shell came in to " B " Company's Headquarters, wrecking the Building, and again our luck held as the Officers of the Company with their servants had just left their quarters—curiosity again!

" B " Company had two men wounded, an extraordinary light casualty list for half an hour's shelling.

Just after dark that evening " D " Company under Captain Oates marched out of Vraignes to co-operate with the 2/6th Battalion in their attack on Vendelles which was to take place the following morning.

CHAPTER IX.

VENDELLES AND AFTER.

The plan of operations for the capture of Vendelles was as follows:—The 2/6th Sherwood Foresters were to attack the village from the left at 2 p.m. on the 31st March, assisted by a bombardment from the Artillery, lasting an hour and commencing at 1 p.m. “D” Company 2/8th Sherwood Foresters, who it will be remembered had moved to Fléchin the previous evening, were to assist the attack by a turning movement from the right. Reconnaissance had revealed the fact that the German trenches ran in front of Soyécourt and Vendelles and then curved backwards towards Le Verguier almost at right angles. The enemy’s position is shown on Plan III. by a thick blue line. Obviously Soyécourt was the key to the position, and that village once captured Vendelles must go. Orders therefore had been given for 61st Division on our right to capture Soyécourt on the night of the 30th. A Battalion of the Warwickshire Regiment had been selected, and they had been somewhat humourously told that the only “billets” available for them that night were in Soyécourt! After the action was over the Staff were, it is believed, asked for a definition of the word billet! “D” Company had safely reached Fléchin, after being rather heavily shelled on the way, but were fortunate in only having 2 casualties, though the M.O.’s Cart made a very serious third. It was extricated with some difficulty.

Captain Hewitt had been despatched as liaison Officer to the Warwickshire Battalion, which was attack-

Fall of Soyécourt. ing Soyécourt, and he arrived about 1.30 a.m. on 31st with the welcome news that the village had fallen, and that our casualties were light.

The march on to Soyécourt was commenced at once, that village being reached without incident. Captain Oates disposed his Company in a sunken road, marked S on the plan, and went on to report his arrival to the O.C. the Warwicks.

Just before daylight a single gun began shelling the road, so the Company was moved for shelter, 2 platoons into a small Wood, and 2 into a Quarry, marked respectively W and Q on the plan.

As the light grew stronger the Company Commander went forward to reconnoitre. An excellent view of the objective could fortunately be obtained from the eastern edge of Soyécourt. The approach to Vendelles appeared open with Enemy wire belt on the left and a road on the right, these features giving direction for the Company's advance.

There was a suspicious looking farm on the left of the line of advance and a Wood on the right, so Sergt. Shacklock was sent forward at 4 a.m. with a patrol to examine these objects and report as to whether they were occupied by the enemy. He returned shortly after 6 a.m. reporting no trace of the enemy: he had, with considerable initiative, worked further forward towards Vendelles and stated that he believed the village to be unoccupied. A report to this effect was sent back to the Brigadier, and the Sergeant's opinion eventually proved to be correct.

The Company Commander's scheme was to advance in two lines of sections in fours, in echelon from the left, with Lewis guns and patrols thrown well out on the right flank. A section was specially told off to mop up Senaves Farm after the Company had passed.

About midday the Warwick Lewis guns opened on the enemy who were digging in about 1000 yards away, and also on some cavalry who were forming up in the

valley on the right flank of " D " Company's line of advance.

Watches were synchronised by an Officer sent forward by the Brigade, and at 12.50 p.m. the company moved up to the North Eastern end of the village.

Our bombardment which commenced at 1 p.m. did not appear very effective, being lacking in volume. It was conducted by our own Divisional Artillery who had naturally had little practise. Gunners cannot be trained in 12 months!

The Artillery fire ceased altogether at 1.30 p.m., but information only reached Captain Oates some two and a half hours later that the attack was to be pushed forward half an hour, and commence at 1.30 p.m. instead of 2 !!

Acting however on his own initiative the Company Commander commenced his advance at 1.30, the men " shaking out " into battle formation as if on parade.

Senaves Farm was safely passed and the Company were within 200 yards of the Cemetery hedge, marked C on the plan, before the Boche took serious notice of them.

At this point however he evidently thought it was time to begin, and ranging shrapnel burst over the Company to be followed almost immediately by a Field Gun barrage which dropped 20 yards in front of

A fine the Company's first line. About 50 per
Barrage. cent. of the shells burst on graze, and the length of the barrage was only some 200 yards, but for accuracy and intensity the Company Commander had not seen its equal.

The enemy batteries were close up, under 2000 yards, and were assisted by what appeared to be an Artillery observer. In addition they were firing in enfilade, and a proportion of their shells were shrapnel.

The order of the Company Commander to break into double time was promptly obeyed, and both lines rushed through the barrage at their best pace. Undoubtedly this order saved many lives, but the enemy guns

were not done with yet, as they endeavoured to keep pace with the Company by 10 yards lifts.

However the Cemetery edge was cleared with little loss of time, notwithstanding the painful nature of the operation, and once in the village our men were lost to view.

Vendelles proved to be unoccupied, but a few minutes later the Company had another severe burst of shelling, which fortunately only lasted a few minutes, the enemy obviously being unable definitely to locate the troops.

Shortly after this Captain Edmunds with 60 men of the 2/6th entered the village and Captain Oates finding that no orders had been sent to him by Lieut.-Colonel Hodgkin decided to push out a Defensive Flank to the right, and thus guard against an enemy counter attack in flank.

Meanwhile the three remaining Companies of the 2/6th had moved on Jeancourt, and could be seen digging in on the ridge above that village.

The position was now as follows from North to South:—The 2/6th Battalion, then a gap of 1000 yards between them and "D" Company's posts, with a further interval of 2000 yards between them and the Warwicks in front of Soyécourt.

In the meantime the Brigadier having received no report as to the success or otherwise of the operations, sent for Lieut.-Colonel Oates and ordered him with his Battalion to march from Bernes on Vendelles "to clear up the situation."

The 2/8th Sherwood Foresters, less "D" Company, moved off accordingly along a valley lying North East of Bernes and following the sound of the guns sighted the 2/6th withdrawing from Jeancourt on Vendelles. It appeared that they had been heavily shelled from Le Verguier and considering their position untenable Lieut.-Colonel Hodgkin decided to withdraw.

The old German support trenches were occupied and consolidated, and as the men were too thick on the

ground Lieut.-Colonel Oates decided to detach "A" Company to guard the right flank, placing them in cruciform posts which they dug under fire.

The shelling was heavy all that evening and night, the enemy's guns making some very pretty practise on a party composed of the C.O., 2nd in Command, Brigade Major and Adjutant, who were sitting the posts and quite unable to shake off their attentions.

Lieutenant Broad's post, situated at a crater on the road, marked X on plan, was retained as it swept the road to Le Verguier, and was in action against an enemy Machine Gun concealed in the wood.

The remainder of the Company was withdrawn to get what rest they could. All ranks had done extremely well, and had stood their first real dose of enemy Artillery Fire with gallantry and coolness. Their casualties were light, 2 killed and 8 wounded, but this was more due to the way in which they were handled than to any want of skill on the part of the enemy or lack of intensity in their fire.

The two men who were killed were, as is so often the case, especially valuable. Lce.-Corporal Barratt was about the best signaller in the Battalion, and had behaved with great gallantry on one or two previous occasions; the second man Private Brabant was a Battalion runner and difficult to replace. They found a resting place next day in the French Cemetery at Vendelles.

Early on April 1st Lieutenant Broad and 20 men with a Lewis gun proceeded to Jeancourt, occupying a post which had been established in the outskirts of that village.

Capture of Redoubt. Orders had been received from the Corps to capture an enemy strong point called R2b, and with this end in view Lieut.

Logan with 2 Platoons of "C" Company was detailed to rush the position just after dark. It proved to be a fairly extensive work, and as the Officer Commanding the party reported that he could not hold it if seriously

counter attacked, the remainder of "C" Company and finally "B" as well went up to the Redoubt, for such it was.

There was more work next day, as orders were received for the remaining two companies to attack the high ground and position at R9a, in order to bring our right up into line with the left, and secure a jumping off place for an advance on the dominating position of Le Verguier.

There was little time to reconnoitre, but Lieutenant Moffatt went out at once with the Scouts, and the 2 Companies, "A" and "D" with Battalion Headquarters were in position in front of the Railway an hour before daylight. "A" Company was in front in line of sections in fours, with "D" Company in support in line of half platoons, distance between companies, 250 yards. A short bombardment preceded the attack, which was completely successful, the position being speedily occupied, and four cruciform posts dug just in rear

Capture of R9a. of the crest. We were heavily shelled all day, and were much annoyed by the persistent fire of enemy snipers who were well concealed. Heavy snow fell during the night and all ranks suffered much from the inclement weather.

Battalion Headquarters moved up in line with the captured position, occupying a hole in the Western Bank of the small wood to the East of R9a. It was the only cover anywhere near and the enemy's guns searched the little copse well, some of the 5.9's dropping within 4 yards of Battalion Headquarters.

At 3 a.m. next morning, April 3rd, the Commanding Officer and Lieutenant Drysdale went out, taking with them half a dozen of the best snipers, whom they posted before daylight in positions from which they were most likely to deal effectively with enemy opposite numbers, who had been causing us several casualties the preceding day. The move satisfactorily settled matters, three of the enemy's sharp-shooters being killed, and the ardour of the rest sensibly cooled!

Unfortunately we had our first Officer casualty in France on this day, Lieutenant Logan being severely wounded in the knee whilst on patrol.

The Battalion was relieved at 8.30 p.m. that night by the 2/7th and moved back to Fléchin for a well-earned rest.

Complimented by Corps Commander. They had done some very valuable work and the cost in casualties, viz., 3 killed and 1 Officer and 18 other ranks wounded, was not excessive.

They were complimented on their work by the Corps Commander in orders.

Meanwhile before relieving the 2/8th, the 2/7th had unsuccessfully attacked Le Verguier, a position of great strength, and the attack was followed next day by an attempt by the 2/5th which also failed with heavy loss to that Battalion.

Major Martyn, M.C., was ordered to take over command of the 2/7th, whilst the Brigade lost the services of Brigadier General Maconchy, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., C.I.E. His absence was much felt by those who had served longest under him. He was a soldier of the old school, who rightly considered discipline the first attribute of a soldier, and he had undoubtedly "made" the Sherwood Forester Brigade.

Pending the arrival of the new Brigadier, Lieut.-Colonel Oates took over command of the Brigade, and he had hardly done so before orders arrived for him to detail a Battalion to attack that ill-omened spot Le Verguier at an early date. Already two efforts had been made on successive days and failed, and it was realised by all ranks that if success were to be achieved, enemy wire must be efficiently cut, and a larger force used than had previously been the case.

Unfortunately we lost two Officers at this time, Major Cursham suffering from Trench Feet, and Captain Dimock from exhaustion consequent on the recent operations.

The weather just now was about as bad as it could be, one snowstorm quickly following another, and we should have had much sickness but for the care Officers took of their men.

Dry socks and hot food were taken up to the trenches, chilled feet were massaged, and a certain number of men were sent into the valley from time to time to get exercise and restore circulation. Valuable assistance came from contact planes, which came down low and pluckily engaged enemy snipers.

CHAPTER X.

LE VERGUIER.

It may not be out of place to give a short description of the position occupied by the enemy at the above mentioned village, which had already checked the Sherwood Forester Brigade, had caused the loss of many valuable lives, and was to take its toll of many more before it ultimately fell into our hands.

The German first line ran N.W. and S.E. on the near side of the crest of the Le Verguier ridge, covering the village itself, and thence due North through the Brosse Woods to Fervague Farm. The second line, parallel to the first and from 600 to 1000 yards behind it, lay on the reverse slope, and was well screened from direct observation. It was a position of great strength, the field of fire on the Brigade frontage at any rate being excellent, whilst their wire which was 25 feet thick and very strong was well flanked by Machine Guns, which could bring a heavy cross fire to bear from both flanks. Moreover their position was not accurately located before the action. Lateral communication in rear of the position was excellent, and the enemy had the advantage of direct observation, looking down as he did on Jeancourt, part of which he held, on the left, and the valley of the Omignon River on the right.

Warning On the receipt of warning orders Lieut.

Orders. Colonel Oates had discussed the situation with the Officers of the 2/8th, as he had made up his mind to detail that Battalion for the attack, and had expressed the opinion that a direct assault on the

village and spur S.E. of it was impracticable. He thought that the enemy's position due North of Le Verguier should have been attacked first, and this high ground, which commanded the Le Verguier position, once taken, the salient round that village would become untenable. He advocated a strong bombing attack up the C.T. running from R2b to the village, so as to endeavour to oust the enemy Machine Guns from their positions flanking the line on our front, and regarded this operation as a necessary preliminary to an assault.

When all is said and done, an attack on a wide front was essential to success, which was only likely to be achieved if the enemy's wire was systematically cut.

This view was taken by a large majority of the Officers familiar with the ground.

The Acting Brigadier however had no say in the preparation of the scheme for attack. He only received his orders, given verbally by a Divisional Staff Officer at 2 p.m. on the afternoon preceding the attack, no orders in writing ever reaching the Brigade prior to the operations.

Plan of Attack. The plan was as follows. The 2/8th Sherwood Foresters were to assemble on the road N.E. of R9a, occupying a frontage of 500 yards, their position being denoted by a map reference, and shown on Plan III, dotted lines marking the flanks of the frontage occupied, and along which the advance was to be made.

On their right were the Oxfords of the 61st Division, and beyond them the Gloucesters.

The left of the Oxfords was directing, and the 2/8th were particularly ordered to march by and keep touch with this Battalion. It was stated that an endeavour was being made at this late hour to get the 177th Brigade on our left to co-operate, at any rate by a demonstration, but this did not materialise. The 2/6th Sherwood Foresters were in support, forming up 200 yards in rear of the 2/8th, with orders to assist them if called upon. The 178th T.M.B. were to await orders with the support Battalion.

Four Machine Guns were to be placed in Caubrieres Woods, with orders to endeavour to silence enemy fire, and assist the Advance.

To each of the Battalions 2 Machine Guns were allotted, whilst the remainder of the Company were to move forward and protect the left flank as far as possible. Zero was to be at midnight, the Artillery bombardment commencing at that hour, being timed to lift off the enemy front line at 12.40 p.m. The German trenches were also to be under enfilade artillery fire from the N.W. This enfilade fire was to creep back along the enemy's line towards Le Verguier at 12.40 p.m., at which hour the Infantry, who had advanced close up to the enemy's trenches, were to rush them.

Brigade Headquarters were to be closed at Bernes at 11 p.m., and Brigade Battle Headquarters opened at Vendelles at the same hour.

The Battle Headquarters of the 2/8th and 2/6th were both at the Cross Roads N.E. of R9a, and were to be moved forward to the Western end of Caubrieres Wood when the Battalions advanced.

The Advanced Dressing Station was at Bernes with a relay post at Vendelles, Battalion First Aid post being at the Cross Roads just previously indicated. Watches were to be synchronised at Vendelles at 10.30 p.m.

Major Martyn, who was now commanding the 2/7th, had been brought back temporarily to command the 2/8th, whilst Lieut.-Colonel Oates was commanding the Brigade, and in order to save time the latter went at once to the 2/8th Lines, assembled the Officers and explained his orders to them, as it was realised that Brigade Orders could not reach them for some time.

An Officer from each of the first line Companies was sent out to reconnoitre during the limited time at the disposal of the Battalion, and the many necessary preparations for attack were made. The Advance was a long one, as it will be remembered that the Battalion was at Fléchin, and the weather of the worst, the country being knee deep in mud.

Major Martyn decided to place "A" and "B" Companies in the front line, "B" being on the right and and next to the Oxfords: these Companies were supported by "D" and "C" respectively, the distance between lines being 100 yards. The formation adopted was line of half platoons in fours at deploying interval. Prior to Zero the line was to be advanced 400 yards in front of Caubrieres Wood, "B" and "C" Companies working round the Eastern and "A" and "D" the Western edge, and then resuming their relative positions prior to the assault. This was a difficult manœuvre, especiailly on a very dark night with no well known features to assist the Guides. One platoon, No. 13, was despatched to regain touch, which had temporarily been lost, with "B" Company, and in doing so came under heavy Machine Gun fire, and were practically annihilated, there being only 6 survivors.

The formation adopted was of course to be varied at the discretion of Commanders in accordance with the ground and accuracy of the enemy's fire, the lines of half platoons shaking out into lines of sections in fours, and later into extended order, as might be necessary.

After explaining the scheme the Acting Brigadier addressed the men, wishing them good luck, and expressing disappointment at being unable to share the dangers of the Attack with them, but expressing complete confidence in them.

About 9 p.m. the Battalion moved off, reaching the old Cruciform posts at R9a at 11.45 p.m. The going was very heavy, owing to thaw following a fall of snow—in fact so inclement was the weather that it was stated afterwards that the Army Commander had almost decided to postpone operations.

All went well until Caubrieres Wood was reached, when on rounding its Western edge "A" and "D" Companies were for some time unable to regain touch with "B" and "C," due I think to the left flank of the directing Battalion getting their left shoulders up too much, and this necessitated a right incline on the part of our right Companies.

Passing across the valley our men were up to their knees in mud, but pressed steadily on, as it was important to get clear of any Counter Barrage which the enemy might put down.

Our guns were firing short, not hitting the enemy wire at all, the shells dropping about 50 yards in front. The left portion of the attack consequently had to halt, and they decided to dig themselves in about 30 yards from the Barrage, waiting for it to lift which it should have done at 12.40 p.m. "A" Company was in the shape of a half moon, with "D" on the flanks to guard against a surprise counter attack. The two Companies were at this time exposed to heavy enemy Machine Gun fire, which was fortunately rather high, most of the casualties coming from occasional shells from our own guns which were still firing short.

It had now begun to rain heavily, and the Boche had put up a strong Barrage down in the valley behind the attacking Force.

A terrible Mistake. To add to its difficulties our guns suddenly further shortened the range for some inexplicable reason, and the whole of the 2/8th line suffered heavily. Our own shells dropped all along 'A' Company's line, and four fell amongst No. 16 Platoon of 'D' Company in quick succession, killing an Officer and several men.

This necessitated a temporary withdrawal until our guns slackened when the work of digging in was continued, as the Acting Brigadier had impressed upon the Battalion that they were on no account to withdraw without orders from him, but must consolidate all ground taken, and hold on to it. So near were the enemy trenches that their men could be heard laughing and talking.

Efforts were made to find a gap in the wire, which was of the usual thick German type, too heavy to yield to the wire cutters supplied to us: these efforts all failed, and as the whole slope was swept by effective Machine Gun fire, to dig in was the only course open to the attacking force. Meanwhile a patrol from 'D'

Company had regained touch with the right portion of the Battalion Attack, and brought the news that ' B ' Company had gallantly dashed right into the Boche wire, not having been impeded to the same extent by our own Artillery as the companies on the left, and in their endeavours to tear a way through had lost terribly, all their Officers being down and over 60 per cent. of their men. ' C ' Company also had suffered heavily and Lieutenant Warry, who commanded the remnant of them, stated that the directing Battalion of the 61st Division had already withdrawn. This Officer said that he had informed an Officer of that Battalion that the 2/8th were digging in where they were, and suggested that he should do the same, but the Officer replied that he had orders to withdraw and did so.

The 2/8th Sherwood Foresters were consequently entirely isolated, and it was decided that Lieutenant Warry and "C" Company should dig in, and act as a Reserve, Battalion Headquarters being informed of what had occurred. Such was the state of affairs in the Front line, and matters were not more promising at Brigade Battle Headquarters.

The Brigade Signallers, unable to find the Guides of the 2/6th Battalion, who were ordered to meet them, started off on their own in an endeavour to find their battle position, neglecting to report to the Brigade their difficulties. As a result of this they lost their way, and it was impossible to find them. 3 a.m., came, and no report of any kind had reached Brigade Headquarters.

The Brigade Intelligence Officer and runners were therefore sent out to clear up the situation, which was made more difficult owing to the fact that Colonel Stewart, who was commanding the Artillery, and who had accompanied the Acting Brigadier to Headquarters, was unable to get through to his Batteries.

At last the long looked for message arrived from Major Martyn, giving a very clear description of the state of affairs, saying that he had been up to the front line, and expressing the opinion that the position in

which the 2/8th had dug themselves in would be quite untenable in daylight, being enfiladed by the enemy Machine Guns and Trench Mortars. Lieut.-Colonel Oates decided to go forward and see for himself the state of affairs, but he had only proceeded a short distance when he met the Brigade Intelligence Officer returning. The latter stated that he had been to the position taken up by the 2/8th, that it was quite untenable, and gave it as his opinion that unless orders for withdrawal were sent at once it would be impossible to get the Battalion away before daylight, in which case it would in his opinion be annihilated.

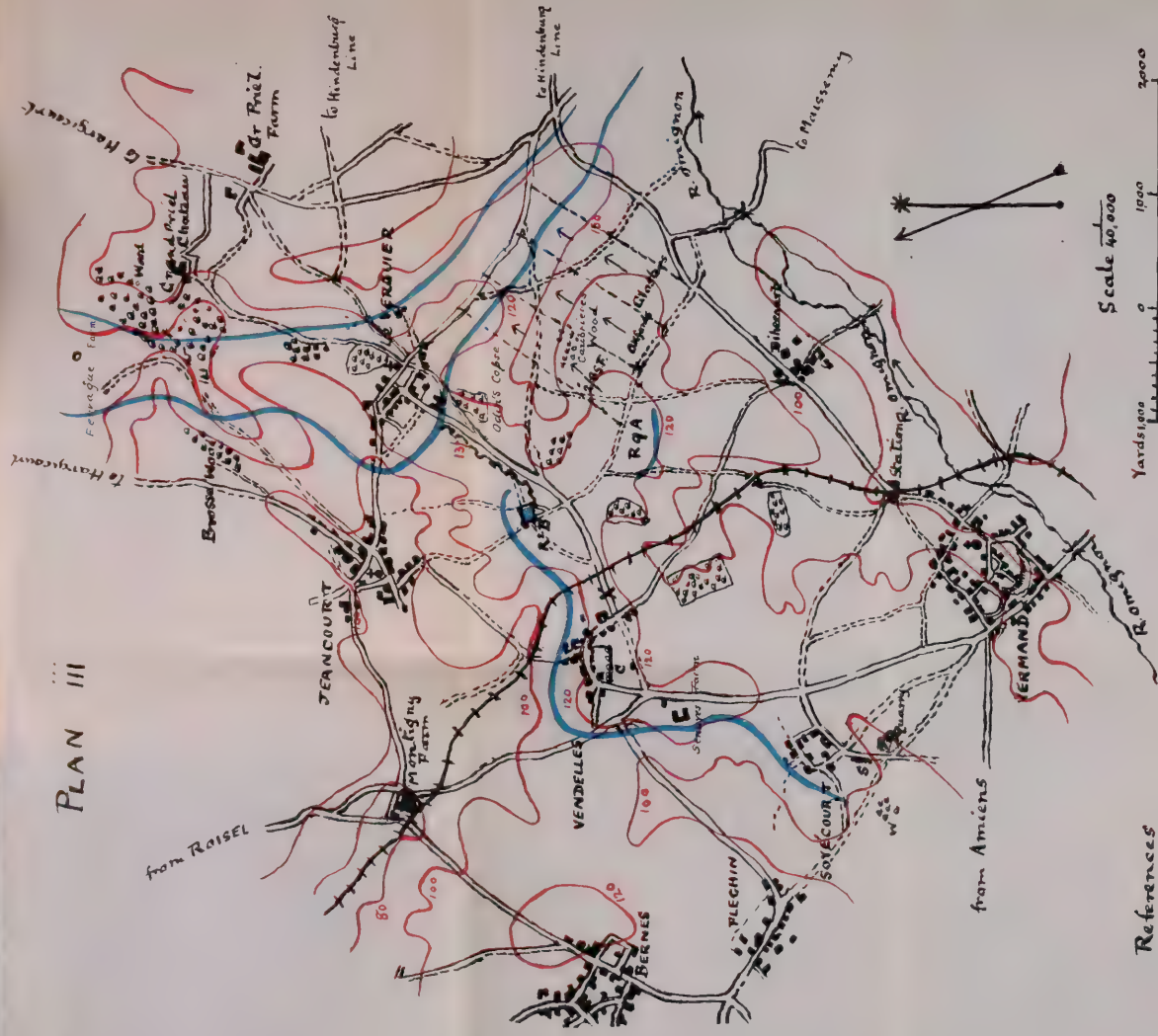
He further stated that he had personally seen the directing Battalion, the Oxfords, marching back to Quarters in column of fours some distance behind the line, and this fact left of course both flanks of the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters exposed.

Orders for Withdrawal. Lieut.-Colonel Oates hurried back at once to Brigade Headquarters and 'phoned through to Lieut.-Colonel Hodgkin and Major Martyn, ordering them to withdraw their Battalions immediately. This was done in good order, all the wounded who could be found being safely brought in, though of course the dead had to be left behind.

At this moment our own Guns again shortened their range, and the Battalion had to endure shrapnel fire of an unfortunately accurate description as far as they were concerned. It was raining in torrents, and the men after their long spell of intensive digging and burdened with their fighting kit, which was now in a sodden state, could hardly crawl along. The Battalion reformed behind Caubrieres Wood, and were there met by Captain Hewitt's servant, who stated that his Officer was badly wounded, that he had carried him back but now wanted assistance.

Lieutenant Warren and a party of men at once volunteered to return, and the wounded Officer was safely brought in.

PLAN III



References

— = Enemy position

••••• = Woods

R²b & Rqa = Enemy strong points

S* = Sunken Road.

C = Cemetery Hedge.

W = Small wood

X = Greater Post

Assistance from the 2/5th Battn. Deeply grateful were Officers and men for the kindness shown by the 2/5th Battalion, as they marched through Vendelles to Fléchin. Stretcher parties had been sent out to help, and hot drinks were ready. This thoughtfulness just made the difference to overwrought men, enabling them to march another mile or two.

Our Casualties. Our casualties had been heavy; 7 Officers and 110 other ranks being killed and wounded. Captain Huntsman, Lieuts. Mackinnon, Wilson, Vyner and Tanner, with 43 other ranks were killed, whilst Captain Hewitt, Lieutenant Beale and 67 other ranks were wounded.

Many acts of gallantry were performed, and one especially should be mentioned.

A gallant Lewis Gunner. The whole of a Lewis Gun team of "D" Company had been killed. Private Billings and another reserve gunner crawled forward on their own initiative and kept the gun in action, covering the withdrawal. Then his assistant being killed, Billings brought the gun safely out of action unaided. He is a little fellow, and in addition to the Gun was carrying his rifle with a pack full of Lewis Gun Drums.

On arrival at Fléchin, Major Martyn and the Adjutant, Captain A. H. Quibell, worn out though they were, were more concerned for Colonel Oates' disappointment at the failure of the attack than for their own weary condition, hastening to tell him that they had done their best, and were so sorry that they had failed. Also they reported that they had heard the men on their way back asking whether they had failed, and wondering "What the Colonel would say." They thought more of the credit of their Battalion than of their own exhausted condition.

What the Colonel told them was that he was proud of them before the Action, but that if possible he was now prouder still.

Brigadier General Stansfeld takes Command. The new Brigadier, General Stansfeld, D.S.O., took over command of the Brigade next day and saw the men as soon as possible after their return, and by a few sympathetic and appreciative words not only removed the sore feeling which defeat always brings, but initiated that sense of personal attachment which everyone in his Brigade bore towards him ever afterwards.

He was much impressed by the bearing of the men who were just being mustered for roll call after the fighting. All were caked with thick mud, but boots were scraped clean, faces were shaved, and files were covering off, marking time in step as they did so. He looked very pleased and said "These are not beaten men."

General Romer takes Command of 59th Division. On April 8th Major General Sandbach left the Division, being succeeded by Major General Romer, C.B., C.M.G., A.D.C. This Officer had been Chief of the Staff in the 3rd Corps, and all felt that we were extremely lucky to get him. He at once saw the Battalion on parade and addressed it, pointing out that they must not feel too bitter against the Artillery for what had occurred, as efficient Artillery took long to train, and that those who had supported the attack on Le Verguier were inexperienced and that every allowance must be made for them.

He also pointed out that no definite orders to cut the wire had been issued to them. He said—and this greatly pleased the men—that he was confident that they would have taken the position had the wire been cut anywhere, that their repulse was no fault whatever of theirs, and that they had done all that was humanly possible.

It was anything but a despondent Battalion which left the Parade Ground that day. They had been deservedly praised by one who knew and understood.

Evacuation of Le Verguier. Next day April 9th the enemy evacuated Le Verguier, a patrol of the 2/5th entering the village unopposed.

Parties were at once sent out to collect our dead; no less than 37 bodies of the 2/8th men were found close to the German wire, where they had been killed in their endeavour to force a way through. On April 10th, Battalion Headquarters and "D" Company marched to Vraignes, whither "B" had already gone, whilst "A" and "C" remained at Fléchin.

The Commanding Officer and Chaplain took out a burying party to Le Verguier to bury the dead. Unfortunately they were heavily shelled whilst doing so, and after two attempts it was decided to finish the ceremony at night, the C.O. not feeling justified in unduly risking men's lives.

Two very nice wooden crosses, made by our pioneer Sergeant, Sergeant Foulds, were placed over the Graves giving the names of those who were resting there.

The Brigade was now relieved by the 176th, and was to have a short rest and reorganise, as General Stansfeld reported it too much knocked about for further fighting at present.

**Four
Actions in
seven days.**

The 2/8th had been in no less than four actions in seven days. We were lucky to get out of the line when we did, as on the following evening one of the worst blizzards ever known in April took place.

**A Blizzard
in April.**

It was impossible to see ten yards while it lasted. Snow lay thick on the ground

all next day, and a terrific snowstorm burst over the country in the evening.

The Battalion was now due for the Line again and on April 18th the C.O., Adjutant and O.C. Companies went up to reconnoitre our new line, which lay East of Hesbecourt, this village being about a mile N.N.W., of Jeancourt. We relieved the 2/4th Leicesters, whose Battalion Headquarters were situated in a Chalk Pit 600 yards East of Hesbecourt. "A" and "D" Companies

**In the Front
Line again.**

who generally worked together, were in the front line, which ran through Grand Priel Woods, Kaffir and Zulu Copses to the North, with an advanced

Post at the ruined Chateau immediately East of Grand Priel Woods.

This must have been a fine building before the advent of the Hun, but I never saw such a complete case of demolition. The whole huge building gave the appearance of having suddenly sat down, the roof remaining comparatively speaking intact. It was situated on high ground, and the garden and grounds were very useful for observation posts. Cote Wood and Brosse Woods, respectively just West of Zulu Copse and Grand Priel Woods were occupied by the support Companies "C" and "B" while Carpeza Copse further again to the West was the position selected for the Reserve. We had the 2/6th Battalion on our left with 2/7th and 2/5th in support, whilst the 176th Brigade prolonged the line to our right.

The day of reconnaissance had been a "terror," rain and snow falling continuously and the party which started at 8.15 a.m. and did not return till 3.30 p.m., were wet to the skin.

The following day however was better and the Battalion marched off at 1.30 p.m., taking over their new line without incident, just after dark.

On April 21st Battalion Headquarters moved up to Brosse Woods, as the Quarry quarters, though comfortable, were much too far back. The enemy shelled us during the day, "D" Company having one killed and two wounded. Fervague Farm invariably came in for the enemy's attention, being shelled daily during the time we were in the line, although so far as I know it was unoccupied by us.

Front line Companies had pushed out a series of posts, to be linked up later on beyond the Villeret-Grand Priel Farm Road, and having completed this work the Battalion was relieved by the 2/5th Sherwood Foresters on April 22nd, moving back to Hervilly, after 9 p.m., as owing to the increasing length of daylight, it was not safe to move before.

Next day there was a Brigade Conference, and we were told that the Battalion was again detailed for an attack of a serious nature, although three weeks had not elapsed since the engagement at Le Verguier.

As this was on a fairly large scale, and of considerable importance, it deserves a Chapter to itself.

CHAPTER XI.

HARGICOURT QUARRIES.

The action at Hargicourt was the final phase of the fighting in the advance of the 59th Division during the German withdrawal from the Somme.

By April 23rd the Division had reached a general position some two miles West of the Hindenburg line, and on the front of the 178th Brigade the centre of the German resistance was the Chalk Quarry of Hargicourt, the system of trenches West of Cologne and Unnamed Farms, vide Plan 1V.

It was necessary for our Heavy Artillery observers to obtain direct observation of the Hindenburg line, and it was with this end in view that an attempt was to be made to capture the Quarries with the neighbouring trenches, and if possible push on to Cologne Farm and more important still the high ground just beyond it.

The Quarries had already been unsuccessfully attacked by other Brigades, and it was realised that their capture would be no easy matter. The Brigadier had at first selected the 2/8th to go for the Quarries, whilst the 2/6th were to take the left attack with two lines of trenches for their objectives. The Divisional Commander however pointed out that the 2/8th owing to their heavy losses had only twelve weak platoons, and in addition were very short of Officers, whereas the 2/6th were pretty well up to strength: he therefore advised the objectives being changed, and assigned the left attack to the 2/8th.

This necessitated fresh reconnaissance, so the C.O. and all Officers who could be spared went out to Hargicourt during the afternoon and evening of April 23rd for that purpose. Capital O.P.'s were found and the party returned with a very good idea of their new frontage.

Scouts and Battn. S.M. Gassed. That night a party of our best Scouts went forward and crawled nearly up to the German trenches, the Battalion

Sergeant Major, who had gone out to reconnoitre suitable spots for an ammunition dump, unfortunately accompanying them. They had nearly effected their object—to ascertain if the trenches were occupied and the state of the wire—when a gas shell, obviously meant for a working party near, pitched within a few yards of them. Not realising that they were gassed the party marched the three or four miles back to billets, and this exertion permanently crippled Sergeant Hyam, the Scout Sergeant, and the Battalion Sergeant Major, both being invalided. Plenty of time was given us for reconnaissance, and we made the most of it, whilst a long conference with the Divisional Commander on the 24th fully cleared up all matters of detail.

A Dress Rehearsal. These being now known confidentially, the Commanding Officer decided to practise the assault on a piece of country near Hervilly, which was rendered as nearly as possible similar to that over which the Battalion was to operate. There was a sunken road, roadways were marked out by whitewashed stones, fencing was put up to represent the Boche wire, and gaps were left in it where the wire was reported cut by bombardment.

The whole plan was laid out life size, and the different companies of course, in this dress rehearsal, carried out duties similar to those for which they were detailed in the real attack.

A line of men with flags represented the creeping Barrage, which lifted in accordance with the time table laid down in the Artillery programme, a Senior Officer superintending the lifts.

The attack was practised three times on the morning of April 26th, and it gave all ranks a feeling of confidence in the result, the remarks of the men which were overheard being optimistic in the extreme. They felt that nothing this time was to be left to chance.

The Before describing the plan of Attack it
Hargicourt will be well to give a short description of
position. the Hargicourt position.

A few hundred yards East of the town lay the Quarries, some acres in extent, and nearly at the top of the slope which was crowned by the fortified farms of Cologne and Malakoff.

The Western edge of the Quarry was lined by a series of slag heaps rising in terraces to about 60 feet, and below them ran the Railway alternately on an embankment or through a cutting.

North of the Quarries two roads branched outwards from Hargicourt leading respectively to Cologne and Unnamed Farms. The objectives of the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters lay between these roads.

The enemy appeared to have dug a double line of trenches near the Quarries running to a junction North of the roads just mentioned, and then following the contours in a N.E. direction, to cover Malakoff Farm. Such was the German position, holding every advantage of ground.

British troops held scattered posts in Hargicourt and on the slope rising North and South from it, and also the village of Villeret, which however was overlooked from the Quarries. It was extremely difficult to get an accurate summary of the enemy's dispositions, which were well concealed, and although we had the advantage of Aeroplane photos it was not possible for these always to discriminate between real and dummy entrenchments.

Plan of The plan was as follows. A party of the
Attack. 2/7th Sherwood Foresters, consisting of 3
 Officers and 40 men were to seize some high
 ground beforehand on the left flank of the attack (vide Plan IV.), and by this means support the left of the

2/8th, which would otherwise be in the air. This work was admirably carried out, the fire of this party proving of the greatest assistance to the left attack throughout.

The Objectives. To the 2/6th were allotted three objectives, which included the Quarries and Cologne Farm, whilst the 2/8th acting on their left had two, consisting of two separate lines of trenches with in addition a Switch Trench.

These objectives are clearly shown on Plan IV. and need no further description here.

Artillery support. Zero was to be at 3.55 a.m., and from minus 60 minutes to Zero two 18 pounder Batteries of 295th Brigade R.F.A. were to sweep various unhealthy areas with bursts of shrapnel every ten minutes, whilst at Zero the Railway cuttings were to receive attention, also various reputed strong points and suspected M.G. positions along the frontages to be attacked by the two Battalions.

Also at Zero the 18 pounder barrages, which were composed mainly of shrapnel, commenced, remaining on the different objectives or dangerous areas for varying periods, and then lifting forward to the next spot requiring attention, upon which the assaulting Infantry, who had crept up to within 30 yards or so of the Barrage, were to dash forward and seize their different objectives.

The Field Guns were supported by two Batteries of 4.5 in. Howitzers, some 6 in. Howitzers and 60 pounders, whilst in addition the co-operation of the 3rd Corps Heavy Artillery had been arranged for.

Special attention was being paid by the Heavies to Malakoff Farm, Cologne Farm and other important points, whilst the 48th Division were to demonstrate against the first named place. Moreover we were informed by the Brigadier that specially efficient Artillery had been brought up for our benefit. They put down a magnificent Barrage, and their work during the action elicited grateful comment from Officers and men alike.

At Zero plus 28 minutes to plus 58 minutes, the 18 pounders were to lift 200 yards and form a defensive Barrage, intensifying in the event of a counter attack developing.

Further assistance was to be given by the 175th M.G. Company, reinforced by 8 guns of the 200th M.G. Company, who were to establish a Barrage on the Un-named and Cologne Farms, whilst the 2/4th Lincolns were to be held in readiness from 4 a.m. on April 27th at Roisel, to support the 178th Infantry Brigade if required.

Advanced Brigade H.Q.'s were to be at Ruelles Wood, about 3000 yards W.S.W. of Hargicourt, whilst the Battalion Battle H.Q.'s of the two Battalions were both situated close together in a Quarry West of Hargicourt. It was rather far back, and the C.O.'s both wished to go up to the village, but the Brigadier pointed out the many advantages of the Quarry site, such as superior observation and protection, emphasising the point that the village would probably be shelled to pieces, and necessitate a move during the action—a prophecy which was literally fulfilled.

Dress was of course fighting order, each man carrying two flares, to be lighted in the event of a Contact Aeroplane sounding its Klaxon horn, and in addition a pick or shovel with a spare sand bag. Putties were discarded and sandbags worn in their place, as a protection against wire.

Lewis Gunners each carried a pack containing four magazines ready filled, whilst Rifle Grenadiers had twelve Rifle Grenades each.

Battalions were not to be formed up on the Positions of Deployment before 3.35 a.m. or 20 minutes before Zero.

The 2/8th One of the chief difficulties confronting
Deployment. the 2/8th was the Deployment, and the
 time which should be allowed for the
 march from Hervilly. The trouble was Hargicourt village. It was constantly being heavily shelled, and though the most direct route to the position of Deployment lay

through the centre of the village it was felt that should the presence of the marching Battalion be detected and the village heavily shelled, it would prove a death trap. A more devious route was therefore selected and it was decided that 2nd Lieutenant Drysdale with his Scouts should meet the Battalion at the Western entrance to Hargicourt, then lead N.E. through the village, and thence direct across country to the sunken road, where direction would be changed due South to the Position of Deployment. On reaching the sunken road a wire fence had to be negotiated, and although a gap had been cut beforehand, it was obvious that on a dark night delay must be unavoidable, as owing to the proximity of the enemy the utmost care had to be taken to prevent accoutrements rattling or the slightest noise being made. Finally as the leading wave reached the right of the Battalion Frontage it halted and turned towards the objective, each succeeding wave disengaging and moving to its place.

The intricate nature of the movement at night is obvious, especially when it is realised that the position of Deployment was only about 200 yards from the first objective. The route taken by the Battalion is shown by dotted red lines on the plan.

Arrival of two fresh Officers. At 5 p.m. on the afternoon preceding the attack we had a pleasant surprise in the shape of the arrival of Lieutenants Heath and Page, the former from the 1st Battalion, and the latter from the 1/8th. Both had seen a considerable amount of service in France. It seemed rather brutal to send them "over the top" on their first night with the Battalion, but it was so short of Officers that the C.O. had no alternative.

Details of Assault. It was decided that "A" Company under Captain C. P. Elliott, who, owing to the illness of Captain Moffatt, had been brought up from the Transport to command that Company, should form the 1st Wave, as it still had 4 platoons. This first wave was composed of two lines of two platoons each, the Bombers and Rifle Bombers being on the flanks

to form any blocks that might be necessary after the objective had been captured.

This Company was to go through to the 2nd objective and consolidate it.

The 2nd Wave was formed by "C" Company under Captain Warry. This also consisted of two lines, but each, owing to the weakness of the Company, had only one platoon. This Company was to stay in the 1st objective and consolidate it.

"B" Company under Captain Woolley had also only 2 platoons. One of these was detailed to go for the Switch Trench, and one to stay in the Tennis Courts in support.

"D" Company under Captain Oates was to be in Reserve at the Sunken Road, the Officer in Command having orders to act immediately on his own responsibility should it be necessary, as it was realised that the wires to Battalion Headquarters would probably be down.

The Barrage was to play on the 1st objective from Zero to plus 16 minutes, at which hour the 1st objective and the Switch were to be rushed. It would then lift, dwelling on its new line for 2 minutes, after which it would jump again to the 2nd objective which it would pound for 4 minutes, finally lifting to the neighbourhood of Cologne Farm and beyond for a Protective Barrage, as previously described. It was not thought necessary to attack the trenches North of the road at first, as they would probably be empty, and in any case be pinched out between the Switch Trench and the objectives of "A" and "C" Companies.

The last afternoon was spent in further reconnaissance, every available N.C.O. going forward to the village, whilst private soldiers were questioned by their Officers on the details of the attack until they knew almost as much about it as the Officers themselves.

Late in the afternoon of the 26th orders came through that the attack would take place next morning, and everything was ready by 8 p.m.

The Officers of three of the Companies met together in a cellar to have a final yarn, and it was noticeable that Captain Woolley was the life of the party, happily discussing what he would do when the war was over in company with his wife and child, to whom he was devoted. Alas! he was the only one amongst those gathered there to make the supreme sacrifice.

An hour and a half had been allowed to cover the distance from the entrance to Hargicourt to the Position of Deployment.

It seemed too much, but in the result was barely enough. It was a lovely night, with little wind, and the utmost precautions, as to the absence of noise or light, were necessary. It had been arranged that all messages were to be sent to "D" Company, whence four Battalion Runners were to bring them on to Battalion Headquarters.

Stretcher bearers, attached to each Platoon, were to carry a rum ration which was to be given out just before Zero.

Pack Ponies were to bring Reserve Ammunition up to Battalion Headquarters, from whence it would be taken on to the Dump by the Reserve Company.

The hour for parade came at last, the Battalion marching out of Hervilly at 11.45 p.m., Battalion Headquarters leading followed by A, B, D in the order named, "C" Company, which was billeted at Hesbecourt, dropping into its place as the Battalion passed that village. An interval of 50 paces was maintained between platoons.

On arrival at the reverse slope of the Hill overlooking Hargicourt, and marked 130 on the Plan, hot tea was served out to the men from the Cookers, and the Lewis guns which had hitherto travelled on the limbers were removed by their crews.

As they passed Battalion Headquarters at the Quarry the Commanding Officer took the opportunity of reminding Officers and men that it was the Anniversary of the fighting in Dublin—an excellent omen. All went well during the march, though owing to there being

only a narrow track through the village single file had to be adopted. "A," "C" and "B" Companies were all in their places at Zero, but there was a slight delay in the last 5 minutes of the march, and Nos. 15 and 16 platoons were caught by the German Counter Barrage, suffering several casualties. They were however commanded by resolute N.C.O.'s, Sergeants Wayte and Walker, who quickly reformed the men and got them up to Captain Oates at the Sunken Road.

Capture of 1st Objective. The first news of the result of the Attack came from C.S.M. Stockdale, who being rather badly wounded in the arm was sent back by Captain Elliott with the news that the Battalion had taken both its objectives. It had however found some difficulty in getting through the wire at the 2nd objective, and had lost heavily there; further that on arrival it was ascertained that the so-called trench forming the objective was spitlocked only and enfiladed from Cologne Farm. "A" Company was losing men fast, as there was no cover of any description, and Rifle and Machine Gun fire of great accuracy was directed on them from both flanks. Their position was obviously untenable unless and until the 2/6th should succeed in taking Cologne Farm.

Captain Elliott therefore wisely decided to withdraw what men he had left to the 1st objective.

On arrival there he found himself the only Officer remaining in "A" and "C" Companies, and he asked for and obtained a reinforcement of one platoon from the Reserve Company, viz., No. 14 under Lieutenant Warren.

Switch Trench lost and Retaken. Hardly had this Platoon gone forward than news came that the Switch Trench had been captured by one platoon under Captain Woolley, but that an immediate enemy Counter Attack had been successful and our men driven out, Captain Woolley being killed and Lieutenant Perry wounded. Thus for the third time in succession had this unfortunate Company lost all its Officers in an assault.

Captain Oates, in command of the Reserve wisely decided on an immediate Counter Attack, sending 1 platoon under Sergeant Wayte, a N.C.O. of great courage and resource. Within a quarter of an hour a message was received to the effect that the trench had been recaptured with the loss of 6 men, that it did not join up with the main enemy trench and that Sergeant Wayte could hold it without further reinforcements—a business like and heartening message.

Dispositions. The Dispositions of the 2/8th were now as follows, No. 16 platoon was holding the Switch Trench, supported by what was left of "B" Company, who were digging themselves in at the Tennis Court. They were commanded by Lieutenant Perry, who though badly wounded said he could carry on.

Two platoons of "D" Company, Nos. 13 and 15 were dug in along the Sunken Road bank, whilst "A" and "C" Companies with No. 14 platoon, held the first objective. Captain Oates decided to visit "A" and "C" Companies, and in order to do this had to go across the open under heavy fire.

Dawn had now broken, and he found on arrival that the men had got down about two feet, but the work was awkward, as they had to stoop to get some sort of cover from the constant enemy fire. Flares had been lit, as the Contact Planes were circling overhead and "calling up."

Captain Elliott reported that he had found the wire at the 2nd objective uncut, and that they had lost heavily crawling through from fire from both the Unnamed and Cologne Farms.

Captain Oates then visited the Switch Trench, also across the open, and was able to make a very satisfactory report as to progress of consolidation to Battalion Headquarters on the telephone, communication by which had now been re-established.

Block established. After a further visit to "A" and "C" Companies Captain Oates decided to send Sergeant Walker with a party of bombers to clear the enemy trench, first up to a point

in line with the Switch, and secondly to establish a block beyond the junction of the two objectives. These duties were with difficulty carried out, as the party was held up by a M.G. at the junction.

Capture of Machine Gun. Eventually Sergeant Walker crawled out to a flank, and succeeded in knocking it out with a well directed bomb, capturing the gun and killing most of the crew.

A further block was then safely established 100 yards beyond the junction of the two enemy trenches, a platoon being moved up into the captured trench at night fall.

Meanwhile the 2/6th had made a gallant attempt to reach Cologne Farm, but after losing heavily from M.G. fire, had to be content with a line, more or less, in prolongation of that occupied by the 2/8th. Communication with this Battalion and also with the post of the 2/7th was speedily established.

At nightfall it was deemed wise to bring up a Company of the 2/4th Lincolns, kindly lent to us by the Lincoln and Leicester Brigade, to act as a Reserve in case of a big counter attack developing, and this Company was placed in the Sunken Road. Fortunately its services were not required.

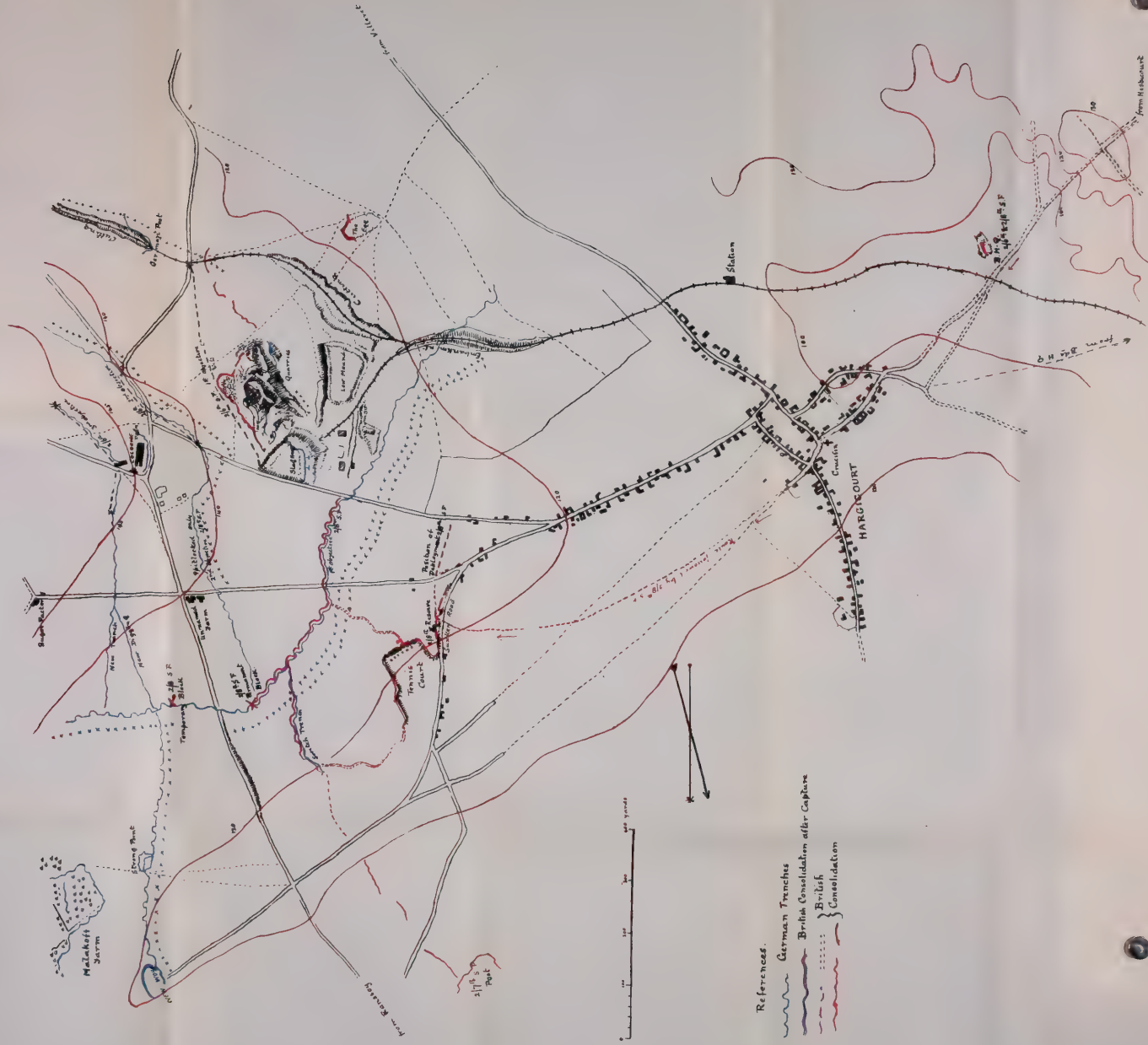
As the Battalion had now only 3 Officers left in the line, the Brigade asked the 2/7th to send us three. These arrived during the evening and were of the greatest assistance.

One alas, 2nd Lieutenant Jamieson was killed by a sniper at day break next morning.

At dusk the Boche put up a heavy "strafe," and the Battalion "stood to," but no infantry attack developed, and to their credit be it noted no Company sent up the S.O.S. signal.

The night was quiet and utilised in consolidating and cutting through the wire denying access from the Main to the Switch Trench, whilst at 11 p.m. Sergeant Hollis and eight men raided the enemy post near Unnamed Farm, Machine Gun support having been previously

Plan N Hargicourt.



arranged for. Unfortunately the enemy fled and no identification was secured.

A Strange Phenomenon. A very curious phenomenon was observed during the hours of darkness in the form of a light burning in No Man's Land. It was afterwards discovered to proceed from one of our dead lying near the 2nd objective. A bullet had ignited the ground Flares in his pocket and eventually set fire to his clothing. At last the bombs which he carried exploded and put an end to a gruesome sight.

Relief by the 2/7th Sherwood Foresters. Nothing further occurred beyond the morning and evening "hate," and the Battalion was able to hand over some greatly improved trenches to the 2/7th on the night of April 18th, on which date it moved back to Hervilly for 2 days rest, which owing to the weak state of the Brigade was all that could be allowed to it.

Thanks from Army and Corps Commanders. Before leaving the Front Line the Commanding Officer had received telegrams expressing the thanks and satisfaction of the Army and and Corps Commanders at the manner in which the Battalion had fought, and these were succeeded on the 30th by a complimentary parade at which the Divisional Commander expressed his appreciation.

Brigadier's Despatch. Our own Brigadier had naturally taken an opportunity of saying what he thought about it, but it will be of interest to quote extracts from his Despatch sent to higher Authority on the 30th inst.:

"Judging from the results of the action, the arrangements made by Battalion Commanders for Deploying and carrying out the Assault were excellent, and the greatest credit is due to these Officers.

All ranks, after capturing the 1st objective were able to hold it in spite of heavy shelling afterwards. I think this is very creditable.

Communications from Battalion Headquarters back were perfect.

Beyond Battalions they were apparently good. The Morale of the Troops was excellent."

In the Line again. On May 1st the 2/8th relieved the 2/7th, taking over the trenches recently captured, and in addition the Quarries and the trenches near them, including the cup shaped depression known as the Egg.

This meant that the Battalion had to hold the whole Frontage lately captured by the 2/6th and 2/8th Battalions. It was an extended line for so weak a Battalion. "B," "C" and "D" Companies were in the front line, and "A," which had had 58 casualties in the Attack, in the Main Line of Resistance.

The chief duty of the Battalion was to cut wire, and deepen Assembly Trenches for the 2/5th Sherwood Foresters, who were shortly to attack Cologne and Malakoff Farms. In executing this work Sergeant Hollis behaved with great determination, and although three times attacked by German patrols succeeded in finishing the work allotted to his party, and the C.O. was able to report that he had personally seen the necessary cuts, ordered by the Brigade to be made in the wire, preparatory to the attack of the 2/5th Sherwood Foresters. This Battalion had orders to attack Malakoff and Cologne Farms with two Companies for each objective. The advance was to commence at 11.30 p.m. on the night of May 3rd, the Assaulting Battalion occupying part of the Trenches held by the 2/8th, using them as Assembly Trenches.

A further bit of fighting was allotted to the 2/8th, as they were ordered to raid the enemy post in the Cutting, S.E. of the big Quarries, immediately information came through that the right attack had succeeded in taking their first objective, and in addition to establish a block slightly East of their Temporary block (vide plan IV.) in order to safeguard the right flank of the left Attack on Malakoff Farm.

They were not called upon for the first duty as the 2/5th right attack did not succeed in taking their 1st objective, and their withdrawal was covered by "D" Company 2/8th and the Machine Guns stationed in the Quarry. The second duty was performed.

Capture and Loss of Unnamed Farm. Meanwhile the left Attack of the 2/5th had achieved a gallant success, and had taken both objectives, and an order came through from the Brigade calling on the 2/8th for a further effort in the shape of the capture of Unnamed Farm.

Colonel Oates decided to make the attempt in daylight and without Artillery support. Unfortunately he could spare no Officers, and the enterprise had to be undertaken by 2 N.C.O.'s and 10 men—all who were available without unduly weakening the line. The idea was that an approach might be made unseen by crawling up the Boche trench from our "Permanent Block" and then rushing the Farm, which the C.O. believed to be only occupied at night.

The ruse was completely successful, but a bombardment by 5.9's of great accuracy knocked out both N.C.O.'s and 5 men.

The remainder finding that owing to dead ground they could not use their Lewis gun, withdrew as they were nearly surrounded by a local Counter Attack from Cologne Farm. Almost simultaneously a very heavy Barrage was put down by the enemy in rear of the 2/5th, and extending along the Valley behind the line occupied by the 2/8th. So heavy was it that all communication with Battalion Headquarters was severed, and the darkness caused by the dust of the exploding shells so intense that it was at first believed to be caused by gas shells. All of us thought that a general Counter Attack would follow, but the enemy contented himself with a vigorous counter attack on the 2/5th, who were driven back from Malakoff Farm to the Switch Trench, their withdrawal being covered by the 2/8th. Colonel Oates determined to

Counter Attack at once, and 200 men of the 2/7th were placed at his disposal. Unfortunately they had been working for many hours, and were some distance away, and as the essence of a successful counter attack depends on quick delivery and fresh troops, the enterprise was reluctantly abandoned.

Birds of ill omen. Meanwhile those birds of ill omen, the Trench Mortar Battery, had come up to the Tennis Court, and were enjoying themselves hugely. The Hun waited until he had located their whereabouts, and then suddenly put down a stiff 5.9 bombardment. As usual in such cases the innocent suffer, fifteen of our men being buried by one salvo, whilst nobody in the T.M.B. was hit!

It can readily be understood how unpopular with Infantry these gentry are. They select suitable positions for their guns, which by the way are always in or near Infantry lines, fire hard for a day or two and then depart leaving the unfortunate holders of the Trench to face the retaliation which always comes sooner or later.

Relief at last. On Sunday, May 6th, the Battalion was relieved by the 2/6th North Staffordshire Regiment and marched back to Hamelet, finding there some excellent Billets.

Death of Lieut. Logan. Soon after arrival there we had bad news announcing the death of Lieut. Logan. No one had realised that his life was in danger, but an operation unfortunately became necessary, and he died under the anaesthetic. We had lost a popular and capable Officer, the best shot in the Division, and possibly in the IVth Army.

Next day Captain J. S. C. Oates left the Battalion to study Staff work at the Brigade Office. "D" Company being taken over by Captain J. E. Broad, whilst Lieut. H. C. F. Jeffcock returned from the Brigade Office and took command of "C" Company. The number of Officers was further augmented by the arrival of 2nd Lieutenants Wardle and Profit as reinforcements.

Our Casualties. At a C.O.'s Conference the Brigadier announced the casualties suffered in the recent operations by the different Battalions of the Brigade.

The 2/8th were again the heaviest losers by a small margin, having 3 Officers and 34 other ranks killed, and 3 Officers and 101 other ranks wounded, whilst the 2/6th followed closely with a total list of 135 of all ranks.

The death of Captains Woolley and Warry was deeply felt throughout the Battalion. Captain Woolley's name was almost a household word in the 8th Battalion, and in the old 4th Notts. which preceded it, as three generations of that family had commanded one of the Companies. Capt. Woolley was an Officer of exceptional ability and boundless energy, his pluck and vitality making up to some extent for a rather frail body and indifferent health.

Captain Warry who came originally from the Artists' Rifles was always cheery and ready at a moment's notice to take on difficult and dangerous work. He was a most gallant Officer. The other Officer killed was 2nd Lieut. Jamieson, who came out with the avowed intention of avenging his brother, who had recently fallen.

Of the wounded Officers Lieutenant Page only joined us the evening before, and he had had more than usually bad luck, having had I understand an equally short stay with the 1/8th under similar circumstances. Lieutenants Warren and Perry had both showed what good stuff they were made of during the short time they had been with us.

Honours. To turn to a happier subject many members of the Battalion received Decorations for gallantry after Hargicourt, Captain J. S. C. Oates, M.C., gaining a well earned D.S.O., Sergeant A. E. Walker a bar to the D.C.M., and C.S.M. Stockdale and Private Delight, D.C.M.'s, Sergeant J. E. Hamer, Lce.-Sergeant Bilton, Lce.-Corporal T. W. Brightmore and Private G. H. Gould, Military Medals, whilst Cards of Recognition of Gallantry were presented on parade to Sergeant P. Stan-

hope, Lee.-Corporal J. Betteridge, Privates J. Buckland, S. J. Billings, C. Dillon and A. E. Johnson.

It may be mentioned that the Brigadier, when presenting Ribbons to those of the above mentioned who were able to be present, drew attention to the exceptional gallantry of Private Delight and stated that the Commanding Officer had recommended him for the Victoria Cross, further that he himself, and he believed the Divisional Commander also, had endorsed the recommendation.

Extracts from Army Orders. The following extracts from Army Orders are quoted as evidence of gallantry, shown by Officers, N.C.O.'s and men of the Battalion:—

THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER.

Lieut. (Temp. Captain) J. S. C. Oates, M.C. 2/8th Battalion Sherwood Foresters.

On April 27th at Cologne Farm.

On the death of Captain Woolley this Officer was left in Command of the Battalion in front of Battalion Battle Headquarters. An urgent request for help was sent to him from the front line, and at the same moment the platoon holding the Switch Trench guarding the left flank of the Battalion was driven out by Counter Attack. He had only 3 platoons in Reserve. One he sent to retake the Switch Trench, and a second to reinforce the front line. Captain Oates then coolly proceeded across the open under fire as there was no other way, first to the Switch Trench, and then to the front line to see for himself the state of affairs. This process he repeated several times during the day although heavily sniped at. The distance he had to travel across the open was 500 yards. Later he ordered a Bombing offensive, successfully blocking vital points in advance of our line, capturing a M.G. and eventually raiding an enemy post during the succeeding night, completely establishing our ascendancy over the enemy.

THE DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL.

No. 307122 Pte. S. J. Delight, 2/8th Battalion Sherwood Foresters.

On April 27th in front of Cologne Farm this stretcher bearer was wounded in the arm and back by a shell. He went forward and dressed some other wounded men under fire, thus being the means of saving their lives. He carried away on his back Private Hickmott to a place of safety, fetched a stretcher bearer party, saw that he was taken to the dressing station, and then assisted two walking cases back to the Regimental Aid Post, handed them over to the Doctor, saw them dressed, and then said that he himself was wounded and could they dress him. He was afterwards admitted to Hospital.

No. 306206 Sergt. A. E. Walker, 2/8th Battalion Sherwood Foresters.

This N.C.O. assisted in the recapture of the Switch Trench on 27th inst., subsequently he was in charge of Bombing operations in the Front Line German Trench. North of the Main Objective. He established a Block which was twice driven in by strong attacks. Both times he re-established his block by accurate Bombing, taking 1 prisoner and inflicting severe casualties on the enemy. The second time he knocked out a M.G. which was holding up his party, by crawling out of the trench and bombing from a flank. It was largely owing to his leadership and example that the left flank was established.

THE MILITARY MEDAL.

No. 307376 Pte. G. H. Gould, 2/8th Battalion Sherwood Foresters.

On April 27th at Cologne Farm.

On his own initiative and unsupported, bombed North up the 1st objective after its capture. He attempted to drive off twenty Germans who were removing a Machine Gun. He continued to bomb this party until ordered to withdraw.

No. 307404 Lce.-Cpl. T. W. Brightmore, 2/8th Battalion Sherwood Foresters.

On April 27th at Cologne Farm.

Assisted in the recapture of the Switch Trench by accurate Rifle Grenade Fire. Afterwards he took charge of two men and established a bombing block in the Main Trench. He was twice driven in, but returned with Sergt. Walker and re-established his block.

C.S.M. Stockdale and Lce.-Sergt. Bilton obtained their honours by fine leadership, whilst Sergt. Hamer distinguished himself by killing 9 Germans himself in one afternoon whilst on sniping duty.

Our stay at Hamelet was a pleasant one. Trips for Officers, N.C.O.'s and men took place by Motor Lorry to Amiens two or three times a week, whilst football matches between Companies were played daily, although it was the month of May!

Amusing incident. On the 14th a terrific thunder storm broke over the lines during the night, most of the Officers dug-outs being flooded. Several of the Transport horses stampeded, and one of them galloped through the roof of Captain Dimock's palatial residence. He had slept quietly through the storm as befitted the dignity of a temporary Divisional Staff Officer, when he was awakened by what sounded like a charge of Cavalry, followed by pandemonium on the roof of his dug-out. It was sometime before he realised that the four animated objects protruding through the roof of his dwelling were a horse's legs, an animal for which, even in his most expansive mood he had had no great partiality!

On May 17th the C.O. and Adjutant rode out to Roisel to call on the 2nd Cavalry Divisional Commander for orders. It transpired that the Battalion was to assist this Division in consolidating the "Brown Line" on their front, for a period of about 10 days before moving on to a new part of the line.

This on paper appeared a nice safe business, being principally wiring and acting as a Reserve to assist the Cavalry if needed.

Alas! we were to have the worst of luck, and lose three valuable Officers and a Company Sergeant Major in this short period of comparative security—such is the Fortune of War.

On the following day the morning was spent in reconnoitring the Brown Line, pointing out their duties to O.C. Companies, and incidentally dodging whizz-bangs, which were rather too accurate for comfort, whilst we held our Athletic Sports during the afternoon. They were a great success, the weather was fine, and Generals Romer and Stansfeld gave us the pleasure of their company.

Templeux Quarries. The move took place next day, the 2/8th marching to the Extensive Quarries North East of Templeux, where the whole Battalion, as well as some Cavalry and Indian Troops were billeted. Quarters were pretty bad, as the shelter consisted of whatever rough dug outs could be made, with water proof sheets for head cover, and a few tents.

The day after our arrival we received a very welcome addition to our strength in the shape of Captain G. A. Duncan, M.C., of the Lancashire Fusiliers, who had been sent to take on the duties of 2nd in Command. He was an old Regular, who had seen some 6 years service prior to the commencement of the War.

The work of the Battalion consisted in consolidating certain Areas of the Brown Line, which they were to hold in the event of the Front Line being penetrated.

They were reinforced in a few days by the 2/5th North Staffordshire Regiment, and Colonel Oates was detailed to draw up a scheme of defence for the two Battalions.

Presentation of Ribbons. On May 21st a ceremonial parade was held inside the Quarries, the Brigadier kindly coming up to present Ribbons to

Captain Oates, Sergt. Walker and Private Gould, the remaining recipients of Honours being in Hospital. The O.C. "C" Company being anxious to be nearer his work had asked permission to move forward to the village of Lempire about a mile in front of the Quarries. Permission was granted with some amusement, as it was no secret that a good bed of Asparagus had been found there. Poor Captain Jeffcock, it was the last opportunity we had of chaffing him. Two days later

Death of a shell pitched under the table at
Capt. Jeffcock. which he was sitting, wounding him so severely that he died on the 30th, deeply regretted by all his comrades.

His cheery disposition and great business capacity were much valued by everyone who knew him. Nor was this all: the same shell severely wounded 2nd Lieut. Curtis, C.S.M. Kitchen and 2 men of the same Company. Sheer bad luck, as it was one which had accidentally dropped short.

Our bad luck however was to continue, as immediately afterwards the Hun tried to lob shells into the Quarries. Captain Moffatt, ever ready to consider his men, had just succeeded in getting them away in the open, and was on the point of leaving himself when a shell struck him, with the result that he died of his wounds three days later. An Officer of great ability, he had at his own request been transferred from the Cameron Highlanders to the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters, showing his devotion to the Battalion by voluntarily giving up his Kilt—a rare surrender for a Scot! He had seen much service in this War going out in the early days as a Private soldier in the London Scottish. His loss was deeply felt by all.

Meanwhile the Boche had been carefully noting the position of our Batteries around Templeux, as some of these, grown over bold, had had the temerity to continue firing while hostile planes were flying overhead, a piece of inexcusable folly.

The enemy first dealt with a battery of 13 pounders situated in the open, and inflicted 19 casualties on them,

including the Battery Sergeant Major. The Battalion were interested spectators of the punishment.

Next day they gave a Howitzer Battery in Templeux a bad time, pounding its neighbourhood with 8 inch shells for half an hour. Again the innocent suffered, not a single gunner being hit, whilst several Cavalrymen were unfortunate enough to be wounded. Moreover the Howitzer Battery was much the worse for wear when they had finished with it, several direct hits on the guns being obtained.

The Commanding Officer had received orders to proceed to Flixicourt for a C.O.'s Conference at the IVth Army School, where he had the advantage of exchanging ideas with his fellow C.O.'s, seeing the various schools, such as sniping, musketry, etc., listening to some very interesting lectures, notably one by Colonel Luckock on the Somme, and last but not least paying a visit to an Aerodrome, some twenty miles away, where a demonstration was given showing the powers of all the various types of Plane in use in France.

On his way through Amiens he had a pleasant and unexpected meeting with an old brother Officer, Colonel Congdon of the Munster Fusiliers, who was employed as Area Commandant, and had as his Staff Officer, Captain G. Clarke, of the 1/8th Sherwood Foresters. These Officers were most hospitable, and their presence in Amiens considerably added to the attractions of a delightful city. For those who do not know, a dinner at the Hotel du Rhin is a thing to be remembered, and there is an English speaking waiter there!

A Move. On the last day of May the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters moved to Neuville Bourjonval, being in Brigade Reserve for the first few days in the new part of the line assigned to the 178th Infantry Brigade.

CHAPTER XII.

HAYRINCOURT AND GOUZEAUCOURT WOODS.

The new part of the line to which the 59th Division was transferred was a curious one, as the British Line opposite Gouzeaucourt faced East, but on reaching the frontage occupied by the 59th Division turned North East until it came to the village of Havrincourt, where for a short space it looked due North, but on reaching the unfinished Canal du Nord it turned sharply at right angles, following the line of the Canal and facing due East until opposite Moeuvres, where it finally turned towards the strongly fortified position at Queant.

The front which the Division was ordered to watch covered the villages of Trescault, Beaucamp and Villers Plouich, situated about 4000 yards N.E. of the considerable village of Metz en Coutre. Away to the North respectively 4000 and 9000 yards lay Flesquières and Bourlon Wood, with Gouzeaucourt village 2000 yards to the South. Little did the Battalion dream of the next occasion, five months ahead, on which they would be called upon, on the same ground, to take part in one of the most dramatic battles of the War, in which they were to be ordered in the event of a sufficient initial success, to play a decisive role. Metz lay between the two Woods of Havrincourt and Gouzeaucourt, and was a considerable traffic centre for that part of the line.

Havrincourt Wood was situated immediately to the North of Metz, and was a huge wilderness some two and a half miles square, with three tongues stretching North



A LEWIS GUN SECTION IN THE FRONT LINE.

to the Canal du Nord, North East to Havrincourt Village held by the enemy, and South East towards Gouzeaucourt.

It was a Wood typical of that part of France, full of timber of no great value, with communications in the shape of rides poor in the extreme, though it must be admitted that a study of the ordnance map would lead one to a different conclusion.

One wonders greatly at the want of foresight shown in planting these Woods—not usually a failing of the French nation.

There were practically no coniferous trees, and the undergrowth was so dense that it gave the appearance of years of neglect. The only conclusion I could arrive at was that this, and neighbouring Woods, were part of a vast estate planted principally for sport by some great French seigneur, and the proximity of the fine Chateau in Havrincourt Village gave colour to this view. A rambling old world wood in which one expected at any moment to come face to face with a grim old Boar!

Gouzeaucourt Wood was much smaller, and the timber practically worthless, being almost entirely hazel and low scrub. It was always the Headquarters of the Battalion in Brigade support, anything but an enviable spot, stiff with Artillery and shelled to death from end to end.

The Sector allotted to the Sherwood Forester Brigade was the Left, extending from the North Western Edge of the village of Beaucamp to Trescault. At this time there were no Front Line Trenches, but simply a line of Advanced Posts which had been commenced by Battalions occupying the front line, and which it was the duty of succeeding Relief Battalions to gradually link up with each other, and to cut back communication Trenches to those in support.

The object of the British Forces had been of course to gradually work forward in order to get within striking distance of the German Defences, the exact position of which in this part of the line had not been accurately determined.

Early in June the Battalion was reinforced by several new Officers, of whom 2nd Lieut. Bampton had had considerable experience in this War, whilst 2nd Lieut. W. S. Jones had served as Lewis Gun Officer with the 1/8th. Besides these there arrived 2nd Lieutenants F. Lewis, a Yeoman, W. Imison, N. Charlesworth, J. Hutchinson and E. N. Smith, also a most welcome draft of 56 other Ranks from the 9th and 10th Sherwood Foresters. This was all very well as far as it went, but the C.O. had specially applied for experienced Company Commanders, and with the exception of Mr. Bampton none of the new Officers could lay any claim to such a qualification.

In the Front Line again.	On the night of the 6/7th of June the Battalion relieved the 2/7th Sherwood Foresters in the left sub-sector of the left Brigade Sector.
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“A” and “D” Companies occupied the advanced posts, which were East of Bilhem Farm, “B” Company were in support, whilst “C” Company were in reserve. Battalion Headquarters were at first in Havrincourt Wood, but moved forward next morning to a small Quarry situated about 1000 yards East of the Wood.

This was obviously a better position, further forward, inconspicuous, and not far from the terribly long communication trench which wound its way up to the front line. This trench was a terrible bug-bear to Officers visiting the line, and at first the writer was not convinced of the necessity of following its gyrations throughout their whole length, especially as it was not considered good manners on the part of the Boche to shoot at a party of two. One journey across the open however convinced him, as an extremely accurate whizz-bang was followed by pursuing shells of heavier calibre as he stumbled into the C.T. and hurriedly made his way forward, much impressed by the accuracy of the enemy's observation. On our right were the 2/5th Sherwood Foresters, whilst the 42nd Divison prolonged the line to the left.

It was fortunately a quiet bit of front, as the Battalion badly wanted time for the new Officers and men

to learn their work and settle down. None of the old Company Commanders were left; it seemed like a new Battalion, and it was a desperately anxious time for all of us. The Battalion H.Q. Staff were up most of the night taking it in turns to visit the line and find out "who was who."

Fortunately no raid took place and nothing of importance happened, our losses for the four days in the front line only amounting to 2 killed and 5 wounded.

The Brigade in Reserve. We were relieved on the 11th by the 2/6th North Staffords, who were so late in coming up that it was broad daylight before the relief was complete. Unfortunate "A" Company did not reach camp at Equancourt till 6.30 a.m.

The Battalion was only out of the Line for eleven days, but training was conducted at high pressure during that time, and the newly formed sections and platoons were already beginning to shake into their places.

Brigade Sports. Some most successful Brigade Sports were held on the 20th June, and were attended by the Corps and Divisional Commanders. The Battalion helped itself satisfactorily, the crowning performance being a fine and well deserved victory in the Tug-of-War. This event had generally been looked upon as a sort of perquisite of the 2/6th, but our Battalion team had been carefully coached by the Commanding Officer, who was not altogether unknown in the Arena at Balls Bridge. The team responded splendidly, and in turn defeated the 2/7th, 2/5th and 2/6th, not losing a single pull. The final was hardly over before a terrific storm burst over Equancourt, an agonised message being received from the President of the Officers' Mess Committee to say that the Cook House no longer existed, and that it was extremely doubtful whether the Mess itself would last much longer. Under these circumstances was it possible to entertain the Brigadier and his Staff? The latter on being consulted said "Yes," and later on was good enough to say that it was the best dinner he had

had for some time. The sports were followed by a Brigade Rifle Meeting at which Lieutenant Imison took 2nd prize in the Revolver Competition. The Meeting was a good one, but many of the Battalion were unable to compete owing to the imminence of our move

up into the line, which took place on the night of the 21/22nd. The Battalion was in support in the right Brigade Sector in Gouzeaucourt Wood.

In the Support Line.

As was expected we were subjected to a very heavy shelling by the enemy, who were well aware of the number of British guns concealed in the Wood. Sunday, the 24th, was a bad day, but the Monday following was worse and "B" Company had a very bad time, losing 1 killed and 6 wounded. The Company Cooks were especially unfortunate, as one was killed and 3 wounded whilst taking the hot tea up to the Company's lines. The C.O. decided to move the Company as soon as it was dark, to a sunken road which ran through the Wood, and here they were very comfortable.

Two more men were wounded next day, but considering the incessant nature of the shelling our casualties were light.

Battalion Headquarters were most fortunate, as they occupied an old Boche stable at the Eastern edge of the Wood, an obvious mark for the enemy who of course knew of its existence. Yet in spite of the fact that a Battery of Artillery fired every evening just in front of this spot it was never shelled whilst we were in that part of the line, though we heard that a Company of Signallers who occupied it later were obliterated. I think the reason for our immunity lay in the fact that everyone, including orderlies and Staff Officers, who are invariably the worst offenders, were obliged to visit Battalion Headquarters by a path running under cover through the Wood, no one being permitted to come across the open which was the nearest way. Sometimes we caused horsemen to gallop past the entrance to Headquarters without stopping or signalling in any way. There was consequently no track

and I think for once we deceived the wily Boche, and incidentally gained a moderately comfortable home.

Heavy Enemy Bombardment. Just before our move, we had evidence of the accuracy of enemy shell fire, and the thoroughness of their methods.

A 60 pounder Battery of ours had been brought up to a small open space between two parts of the Wood. Suddenly the Boche gunners took it on. I never saw more beautiful shooting. There were two or three direct hits, and a sheet 80 yards by 50 would have practically covered all the shell holes. They were mostly 8 inch, and one hole I measured was 31 yards in circumference and 12 feet deep. At the end of half an hour what could be moved was taken away for repair, but there was not much of it! Generals Stirling, R.A., and our Brigadier came up that afternoon, having tea with us, and afterwards going to view the scene of destruction.

In the Front Line. On the night of June 30th—July 1st the Battalion relieved the 2/7th in the left sub-sector of the Right Brigade. As the relief was a tricky one the 2/7th threw out a screen to cover the relief until it was completed. "C" Company and half of "B" were in the Front Line; the remaining half of "B" and 1 platoon of "D" Company in the Support Line; 1 platoon of "D" in 2nd Support; 1 platoon of "A" was in Right Reserve, whilst 1 platoon of "B" Company was in Left Reserve.

Battalion Headquarters were in a sunken road just South of the village of Beaucamp with 1 platoon of "A" Company in rear of them, occupying the intermediate line, which was the Line of Resistance. The Trenches were in a terrible state, many of the Communication Trenches being 2 feet deep in liquid mud, but the order was that they only were to be used and no movement across the open was to be allowed. To give some idea of their state it took the Commanding Officer and Adjutant from 10.15 a.m. till 3 p.m. to go the round, as the posts of the front line were not yet linked up and in some cases it was necessary to come right back to the

support line, moving along it for some distance before the next forward posts could be approached.

The position of Companies were varied from time to time, those in the front line getting a spell of duty in support and Reserve and *vice versa*.

During our tour in the Front Line we had the 2/5th Sherwood Foresters on our right, a very pleasant and satisfactory combination, Colonel St. Hill who commanded them being a most charming man and efficient soldier. He used constantly to stroll over to our Mess Dug-out, and was very popular with us all.

The Brigade was much disturbed at night at this time by constant Gas alarms, of which there were two or three on consecutive nights. Try as we would we could never discover the culprit, our only clue being that it appeared to start somewhere in the Division on our right. It was irritating, as once one had heard the weird note of the strombos horn, it was very difficult to get to sleep again even if it were a false alarm. Probably brother Boche had something to say to it!

It was realised that in such a quiet part of the line an attack in force was extremely improbable, the opposing forces being too far apart as yet, but Raids were most likely especially whilst our front line was so unconnected and incomplete.

Fighting Patrols. Each night therefore the 2/8th sent out a fighting patrol, so as to meet and engage enemy raiding troops before they reached our posts. The usual procedure was for a strong patrol of about a couple of Officers and 40 other ranks, with 2 Lewis guns, to go well out to the front just after dark and reach some previously selected spot, well suited for visibility. Here they waited in the hope of spotting an enemy patrol before they themselves were seen, and so getting in first blow, always a fairly decisive factor on these occasions. Alas the difficulty was we could never find an enemy patrol! The 2/7th, our predecessors, had spoilt the market, surprising and dealing so severely with

an enemy raiding party that all initiative on the part of the Boche was at a discount. A very good story was told to the writer against our old friend Colonel Martyn, who was commanding the 2/7th, and who was justly proud of a very fine performance of one of his fighting patrols. They had dispersed a German Raiding Party, killing and wounding several. One of the dead was of such fine physique that he was brought in to the 2/7th Headquarters and rumour had it that the C.O. was seen carefully measuring him with a view to getting him stuffed! The War would indeed have been unbearable had not tragedy and comedy been so inextricably interwoven, and had not our Officers and men been blessed with a sense of humour.

On July 4th a party of Officers belonging to the 2/6th London Regiment came up to reconnoitre the line, informing us that they were shortly to take over from us. Right glad were we to hear this as the Division was overdue to go out of the line for a rest and intensive training.

On the 6th orders came for the Commanding Officer to proceed to England for a three days Machine Gun Course at Grantham, and this was to be followed by ten days leave which was now due.

A last visit was paid by him to the line at 2 a.m. and as he turned his back on it and moved off in the direction of Desart Wood, Brigade Headquarters, he had some difficulty in suppressing an insane desire to run! Leave is so precious, and so many things may cancel or postpone it.

**Relief by
the 2/6th
London Regt.** The expected relief took place on the night of the 8/9th July, and was a simple affair, as we had old hands to deal with, and the 2/6th Londons wasted no time over the matter. The 2/8th marched back to Equancourt where they passed the night, proceeding to their Camp at Le Mesnil next day. We had had very few casualties during our tour in the front line, but the whole Brigade had to mourn the loss of Colonel St.

Hill who commanded the 2/5th. Alas he was all too contemptuous of danger, and it is feared lingered a little too long at a low part of the Communication trench, on his way up to visit the front line. His memory will always be green amongst men who knew him. It seemed to be his role in life to lend a helping hand whenever it was most wanted. May his gallant soul rest in peace.

CHAPTER XIII.

OUT AT REST.

Le Mesnil, where the 178th Brigade was concentrated, is situated about 6 miles South East of Bapaume, being quite close to the old enemy positions at Le Transloy and Saily Saillisell, which lie respectively 2 miles to the North West and South West.

Divisional Headquarters were at Barastre about the same distance to the North.

Our quarters were anything but a health resort, being nearly in the centre of some of the most desperately fought battles of the War, and one had only to walk a few hundred yards to become intimately acquainted with the fact. The Country round was a perfect network of Trenches, generally protected with strong wire, which at this time of year was fairly well concealed by a luxuriant growth of long grass. Unexploded bombs too were not uncommon, and the 2/8th had a transport man badly wounded, owing to the explosion of one, caused by his scythe striking it as he was cutting grass for the horses.

There were other unpleasant experiences which need not be alluded to here.

The Camp was divided by a road running roughly East: three of the Battalions, 2/5th, 2/6th and 2/7th were on the North side of the road, whilst the 2/8th had the South side to themselves.

Little had been done to the Lines prior to the arrival, the troops having practically to make the Camp themselves. It was a pretty bad site, and none of us felt well whilst there.

It was relaxing to a degree, and every now and then one got an unpleasantly suggestive whiff if the wind was in the wrong direction.

P.U.O. That dire disease P.U.O. very soon made its appearance, but curiously enough it confined its attentions, so far as the Officers were concerned to the three Battalions North of the Road. They had a terrible time, more especially the 2/6th who lost both their 2nd in Command and Adjutant, two very valuable Officers, who were evacuated to England, and never returned to their Battalion. The 2/8th lost a few N.C.O.'s and men, but Captain Quibell, the Adjutant, was the only Officer who had to go to Hospital, and he speedily recovered.

Re-organisation. The early days at the new Camp were spent in reorganisation, it being decided to work with two platoons per Company instead of four, owing to the weak state of the Battalion.

Specialist training, and above all Musketry, which had been too much neglected of late in the British Army, were the subjects to which most time was devoted. The weather was bad and heavy thunderstorms, which did not seem to clear the air, all too frequent.

Visit to the Somme Battlefields. After Church Parade on the 15th July, Officers paid a visit to the Somme Battlefields from Bazentin to the Butte de Warlencourt. One cannot help I think contrasting most of the modern battlefields unfavourably from an instructional point of view, as compared with those say in South Africa, interesting as of course they are when one remembers the Homeric struggles which took place on many of them.

Divisional Sports were held at Barastre on the 21st and a Brigade Rifle Meeting at the same place four days later, pleasant interludes to a rather dull time.

A Draft. Our eyes were gladdened by the arrival of a draft of 75 N.C.O.'s and men on July 28th. They were of a distinctly useful type, with many old hands amongst them.

Brigade Race Meeting. On the same afternoon a most successful Race Meeting was held under the auspices of the Brigade. As this is very fully dealt with in a later chapter, which is written by one of the principal actors therein, little need be said here beyond a vote of thanks from the Battalion at large to Captain W. N. Wright for his excellent riding and even more excellent tips!

The 2/8th Transport were men of means for months to come!

About this time we had some most interesting Divisional Schemes, under the personal instruction of our Divisional Commander. They were of a very advanced nature, and obviously meant to lead up to the time when we might be required in Flanders. Some were in open warfare and some trench to trench attacks, made by the Division as a whole, and always succeeded by a short and pithy criticism of the work done, in which General Romer pointed out the faults committed. At one in particular we all felt very proud, as the decision given was to the effect that the Sherwood Forester Brigade, with the 2/7th and 2/8th in front, had taken all their objectives, while the Lincoln and Leicester Brigade were adjudged to have only succeeded in one. And so July drew uneventfully to a close.

The Model Platoon. A great compliment was paid to the Battalion at the beginning of August. In many Corps a system had been inaugurated, by which each Brigadier was asked to select a platoon in his Brigade, which was meant to serve as a Model of all that was smart, soldierly and correct. Our Corps Commander was very keen on the idea, which could of course only be carried out by Brigades at rest, as the training was supposed to last three weeks, and a large variety of subjects was traversed.

When the Platoon was considered to be up to concert pitch, an admiring and probably rather critical Brigade was marched down by their respective C.O.'s to see the various exercises performed.

Our Brigadier, General Stansfeld, came to see Colonel Oates and told him that he had selected the 2/8th as the best Battalion to furnish the Model Platoon, and asked him to pick out the most suitable for the work. After some hesitation No. 9 platoon was taken as being the most reliable all round. Two Officers were required, and Lieut. W. S. Jones and 2nd Lieut. E. R. Elphick, the latter of whom had joined the Battalion at Equancourt, were detailed. Both had a great deal to learn, especially as regards what one might call the spade work of their profession, but as time went on it was seen that they had the right stuff in them and they were willing to learn. Very soon Mr. Jones began to develop a good word of command, and a capacity to interest his platoon when lecturing, whilst the men were keen enough for anything. The Brigadier took a great interest in the Platoon, and frequently came down to see it work, offering many valuable suggestions.

The subjects taught were diverse, open warfare, trench to trench attack with the difference between the two clearly emphasised, guard mounting, lectures and a variety of other subjects.

C.S.M. Catley. Instructors were at first furnished to help the Platoon and Section Commanders, and one of these, Sergeant, afterwards C.S.M. Catley, of Newark, afforded all of us much amusement. He was far more like an old Regular Drill Instructor than a Territorial who only enlisted during the War, and his exterior and expletives lent colour to this.

If ever a man devotedly loved his Battalion it was Sergeant Catley. He was left behind at Fovant, having greatly to his disgust contracted German Measles! When convalescent the authorities tried to send him everywhere but to his own unit: he worried everyone with whom he was connected to such good purpose that at last "because of his importunity" he was allowed to rejoin his old Battalion, looking much thinner, and now only a Corporal!

Very glad were we to see him, and he was promoted Sergeant next day.

Alas! we lost him at Ypres in the darkness. No one saw him fall, and his body was one of the many never found—probably one shell killed him and the next buried him.

The powers that be now began to take some interest in us, and quite a number of Officers joined, Lieutenant Hayhoe, recently of the 2/5th and also 2nd Lieutenants Roe, Hadden, Smith, Rounds, Cook, F. B. Sharp, and McDonald, so that the Battalion was nearly up to strength again. The weather during the first half of August was appalling, and greatly interfered with every form of training. Some very useful work however was put in, the Battalion being practised in the rather intricate duties of a Raid of the Silent Variety, the main elements of success being speed, silence and the intimate knowledge of their various duties by all the different parties.

On August 18th the Brigade carried out a most interesting and difficult exercise. It consisted of a night march of some 3 or 4 miles, followed by an attack on two lines of trenches, which were held by a skeleton enemy. As the different Battalions had all to move by different routes, in order to reach their Positions of Assembly exactly up to time, and then advance under a dummy barrage over country which they were not allowed to reconnoitre by day, it will be realised that the task was not an easy one, and the Divisional General was very sceptical as to its success. The exercise however was very well carried out, and the Deployment for Attack completed without the Defence having an inkling of the proximity of the attacking force. The one adverse criticism was that the marching was rather fast for night work.

During the latter portion of the Month heavy drafts arrived for the Brigade, the 2/8th getting three lots of 38, 120 and 50. These were mostly good men, who had been previously wounded and were now fit. As usual men who had previously served in one Battalion were detailed for another, but the Brigadier, aided by the good

will of C.O.'s, speedily put this right, and men if they wished were allowed to go back to their original units.

The arrival of the different drafts was clear evidence that we should shortly move, and one could not help wishing that these drafts of good men had been sent a little earlier, so that they might have time to shake down with their new comrades before being put to the severe test of a battle on a big scale—we knew that we were probably destined for Flanders and what that meant.

Move to Aveluy. Orders arrived very shortly, and at 3.30 a.m. on August 24th the Battalion left Le Mesnil, having breakfast before starting. The first half of the journey, eleven miles was marched, the latter half, of about the same distance being by bus. The weather for once favoured us and only three men fell out. Aveluy, which is situated quite close to Albert, was reached in the evening, and we were soon comfortably housed in excellent Nissen huts. The men were delighted, none of them having had access to a town of any kind for some time. There was a very fair Club too, where Officers could get a capital dinner.

It was known that we were not to stay long in the Albert district, and very wisely all ranks were given an easy time, as they had been kept pretty hard at it for the last two months.

Move to Flanders. We left our Camp at 4 p.m. on the last day in August, entraining at Beaucamp, being particularly lucky to reach the railway dry, as the weather for the last few days had become abominable. The men were very crowded on the train, 38 being placed in each truck. This would have mattered little for a short journey, but unfortunately there was a breakdown in the line, and the Battalion seemed to be travelling nearly all over France.

Our train was due to reach Godewaersvelde at 3 a.m. on September 1st, but did not actually arrive at that station until 4.15 p.m., a very serious matter for the men. Orders were very vague as to our destination, but we

were told that our Camp was situated **Winnezeele.** near Winnezeele, and that its distance was not more than 6 miles away. The Battalion marched off at 4.50 p.m., and a guide from the 2/8th met us just outside Winnezeele. Here we got more definite news as to the locality of our camp—for we were under canvas—and to our dismay we found that we were in for a 12 mile march.

It was not a promising outlook, as the men had been very short of food, owing to the unexpected length of the journey, and it had been impossible to get them any hot tea. To make matters worse the Guide lost his way, so that Camp was only eventually reached at 9.30 p.m. Several men collapsed, and it was not to be wondered at, as the new drafts, only lately joined, were not yet very hard. It was not too easy getting these men in to Camp, as the way, which was difficult to find in pitch darkness, was only known to our one guide, who eventually corrected his mistake and led us into Camp.

Hot tea served out at 10 p.m. soon put matters right, and a lovely morning quickly dispelled the discomforts of the last forty-eight hours. The 2/8th Camp was in the Wormhout Area, close to the Belgian border, and some distance from a village of any size. The country round was much more like England, especially North Notts., than anything one had seen hitherto, the small fields being bounded by hedges, so that it was possible to form some idea as to the acreage of each farm and the crops grown on it. Very thrifty were the little farmers here, every square yard being used for cultivation of the most intensive kind.

Their horses were small, and they did not plough their land deep, in fact the system more nearly resembled that practised in the East than anything the writer has seen in Europe.

The inhabitants did not appear too cordial, and drove very hard bargains with us over the price of articles of food such as eggs, bread, etc., but we were not in a mood to complain or be over particular.

The Commanding Officer had for some time been far from well, suffering from Neuritis, and consequently the Brigadier, in his usual thoughtful manner, had arranged for him to take advantage of a new order, which had just come out, by which a certain number of Officers, who were suffering from War strain, were to go home for 6 months rest, returning at the end of that time to their original Commands or positions.

The C.O. was to stay in order to command the Battalion in the big "Push" in which it was expected to take part, and then go home for the Winter.

Captain T. S. Elliott, our M.O., and a trained Masseur in the band worked wonders, and soon brought about a welcome improvement in health. The training areas were some distance from our camp, and as a number of Divisions were out at rest in the neighbourhood, waiting for their call, we had to take what we could get.

Much time was spent in training the Company Officers in simple tactical schemes, such as a portion of the attacking line being held up, or the sudden appearance of a Machine Gun.

Co-operation between the Commanders of small bodies of men was the chief lesson to be learnt, accompanied by quick decision.

No troops were necessary, and ground could easily be found close to billets, so that much could be done during an hour's tuition.

We often used to take our No. 1 Lewis Gunners out in order to accustom them to site quickly for their guns, and a number of promising young N.C.O.'s generally accompanied their Company Officers. The exercises were very popular and really looked forward to.

The more elaborate exercises with troops were generally carried out on the Brigade training ground, some four miles away, the principal object in all the schemes being to impress on platoon and section Commanders the wisdom of moving to the attack in small columns, as the Artillery always insisted that this formation presented

a very bad target, and that they much preferred an extended line to shoot at, no matter how great the interval between men.

For demonstration purposes our No. 9 Model Platoon was invaluable; they seemed never to lose their keenness, and worked as if they realised that they had a reputation to lose.

C.O.'s visit to Ypres. On September 10th the four C.O.'s in the Brigade were sent by Motor Car to reconnoitre some ground East of Ypres, near Railway Wood, as it was expected that the Brigade might go into the Line near there. It was a foggy morning and only some 2 or 3 miles had been traversed when the driver, in turning a corner, took the car straight into a ditch, overturning it on the top of the august ones. The volume of sound which

A Disaster. penetrated the fog is said to have frightened many labourers near by, being a sort of mixture of Light Infantry and Heavy Cavalry language. There was a strong difference of opinion as to whether defeat should be accepted and a return made to camp on foot, or a further effort made to obtain another car.

Eventually a fresh start was made on a new car sent out by the Division, and Ypres was reached about 6.30 a.m., the party reporting to the Headquarters 126th Infantry Brigade at 7.15 a.m. It was soon realised that the Boche was annoyed, and hardly had Brigade Headquarters been left behind than the four with their guides found themselves inside a very hot box barrage, through which it was not wise to attempt to escape. Some very unpleasant scenes were witnessed, but as a reconnaissance the visit was a failure, and meeting their motor near the Menin Gate, no time was lost in the return journey, as Poperinghe was getting a strong dose of Shrapnel. The little town was choked with transport, and it seemed that a few enemy bombing planes could have worked untold havoc in the narrow street during the time rations were being brought up.

Anniversary Dinner. On September 14th, Colonel Oates invited as many of the Officers as could be accommodated to dine with him at Battalion Headquarters to celebrate the completion of his 3 years continuous tenure of Command of the Battalion.

Fourteen Officers dined, five of whom were at Newark with the C.O., namely Major Cursham, Captains Quibell, Staniforth and C. P. Elliott, and Lieutenant G. G. Elliot.

The country round had been scoured successfully for Ducks, and Captain Wright had been given *carte blanche*, as regards the Wine List. In the result the dinner was excellent, the Cassell Champagne of the best, and last but not least the Brigade Band enlivened the proceedings.

During dinner a very nice Congratulatory Wire came from General Romer, to which a suitable reply was sent.

Football. Advantage was taken of our last few days at rest to play off the semi-final in the Brigade Company Competition, when "A" Company, after much previous bad luck, defeated the best Company in the 2/7th by 1—0, at which there was great rejoicing.

A most interesting lecture on Tanks was given at Winnezele on the same evening, and this was our last day but one in the Back Area.

Move to Watou. On September 20th the Battalion marched via Steenvoorde and Abeele to Watou No. 2 Area. The march was a trying one of 11 miles almost entirely on cobbles—all soldiers know what that means—and camp was not reached until 11 a.m., the march taking 5 hours.

Here the Headquarters of the Battalion waited until joined by the detachment, which had just previously left under Major Duncan for the Vth Army Musketry Camp.

2/8th win Brigade Cup. Before leaving Watou the Final tie for the Brigade Football Cup was played off, "A" Company beating the 2/5th Champion Company by 1—0. There was much christening that night in the Company lines.

On Sunday, September 23rd, as many Officers as could be spared went into the Line to have a look at the ground over which they would have to fight in a few days. It was now no secret that the Division would shortly be called upon to take part in an attack East of St. Julien.

Very little could be seen and any curiosity which was shown was speedily extinguished by the advent of Boche shells.

At the conclusion of their visit the party joined the Battalion, which was now on the march to Brandhoek Area No. 2.

Visit to Only one day was spent at Brandhoek,
Model of and advantage was taken of this to visit
Operations. a large Model at Corps Headquarters at Poperinghe. Here under a huge camouflaged awning the Area which was to be attacked by the Division was clearly shown, and Officers got a much better idea of the folds of the ground than they had obtained in their visit up to the Line on the previous day. During the 24th, Battalions who were going to take part in the attack succeeded each other in rapid succession for practise on the only available " scrap heap " at Brandhoek.

The whole affair was terribly rushed, and there was practically no time to explain matters to the men.

After dark the 2/8th marched on to their last halt before the battle, passing through Ypres and reaching C Area old British Lines with the loss of one man wounded. Their route was via Vlamertinghe, Salvation Corner, and track No. 6.

CHAPTER XIV.

YPRES.

It may be remembered that the Great British offensive in Flanders commenced on July 31st. It was of course far too late in the season for an operation of such magnitude, and over such a country, but in justice to the British High Command the point must be emphasized that it was their intention to commence the forward movement as soon as the country had dried sufficiently in the Spring. In deference however to the earnestly expressed wish of the French, operations were postponed until the date above mentioned, in order to assist to the utmost the French attack in Champagne under General Nivelle, by strong demonstrations further South.

Unfortunately the great French offensive was a failure, and consequently the year 1917, which ought to have been such a favourable one for the Allies closed with most disappointing results.

It had long been realised by the British Commander-in-Chief that if Flanders were to be freed from the enemy the capture of the Passchendaele Ridge and the Houthulst Forest was essential. These were generally considered to be the keys of the country.

A commencement had already been made by taking the Bellevarde Ridge at the right or Southern end, but the remainder which veered away at a slant from our line was a tougher proposition, and it was, as has been shown, full late in the year to begin.



However the advantages of observation and above all drier ground for our men in the approaching Winter months were so obvious that the attempt was worth making.

The series of great Battles, which followed each other in rapid succession up to the Capture of Passchendaele in November, are known collectively as the Third Battle of Ypres, and it was in order to take part in one of these general Engagements that the 59th Division was moved up to Flanders.

St. Julien. The action, which lasted from the early morning of September 26th to the night of September 28th is sometimes called the Battle of St. Julien, and sometimes of Zonnebeke. For the purpose of this History the former title is the more appropriate, as the part of the line in which the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters fought is nearer to St. Julien than Zonnebeke, being only 2000 yards due East of the former place.

The Forces engaged. The 2nd and 5th Armies, commanded by Generals Plumer and Gough respectively, took part in the battle, which extended over a line from twelve to thirteen miles in length.

Divisional Frontage. The 59th Division, which had joined the Fifth Army was ordered to attack on a frontage of about 1500 yards, extending from the line of the River Hannebeek, which was also the Corps Boundary, to Van Isackere Farm. It had the 3rd Division on its right and the 58th on its left.

The Divisional Commander decided to attack with the Lincoln and Leicester Brigade on the right and the Sherwood Forester Brigade on the left, the Staffordshire Brigade being held in Reserve.

The dividing line between Brigades ran through Otto Farm and Gallipoli Copse, both inclusive to the Sherwood Forester Brigade.

This left a frontage to our Brigade of about 800 yards.

For places referred to in this chapter the Map of Ypres should be consulted.

Brigade Detail. General Stansfeld detailed the 2/6th Sherwood Foresters on the right and the 2/7th on the left to capture the first Areas, "R" and "S" respectively, after which the 2/5th on the right and the 2/8th on the left were to "leap frog" and go for Areas "T" and "U" with the final objectives of Otto Farm and Riverside.

Brigade Headquarters were at Wieltje and Advanced Battle Headquarters were at Capricorn Keep.

Artillery. The attack was supported by the Field Artillery of 4 Divisions and 8 Army Brigades, also by 38 Siege and Heavy Batteries, **the actual number of guns firing behind the 59th Division being no less than 624**, and that be it remembered on a frontage of 1500 yards !!

Plan of Attack. Surprise, the Ally of most successful offensives, was obviously here impossible, the Boche having direct observation, and being fully aware of our intentions. The next best thing was the strongest possible Artillery support—a heavy bombardment followed by a rapid advance close behind the Barrage.

On September 24th, we were notified that the following day was to be "Y" day, that "YZ" night was to be the night of 25th/26th and that Zero day and hour were fixed for September 26th at 5.50 a.m.

The 2/7th had been sent into the line on the 24th, whilst the 2/8th had received orders to send a party down to reconnoitre the Position of Assembly.

Accordingly 2nd Lieutenant J. G. Roe, the Battalion Intelligence Officer, with 3 men per Company, were despatched to the Headquarters of the 2/7th with orders to mark out the Position of Assembly with tapes and discs on "YZ" night, as close as possible behind the 2/7th with the object of avoiding and getting in front of the Enemy Counter Barrage. This Officer also received

orders to select a suitable position for Battalion Battle Headquarters.

The Barrage. Troops were to be in position by 3 a.m., and the Artillery were to commence an intense bombardment at 3.50 a.m., lasting for 2 hours, after which a Creeping Field Gun Barrage, which was composed chiefly of H.E., Percussion, and smoke shell, was to lead the assaulting troops.

The Barrage was to open 150 yards from the Forming Up line and lift at Zero plus 3 minutes, thence for 200 yards at the rate of 100 yards in 4 minutes, thence to the Red Line, which is identical with the boundary between "S" and "U" Areas, at the rate of 100 yards in 6 minutes, thence to the Final objectives at the rate of 100 yards in 8 minutes. All lifts were to be of 50 yards.

An Artillery Smoke Barrage was to be placed along the Hannebeek Valley from Bordeaux Farm to Riverside.

On the S.O.S. signal going up all Batteries were to open fire at a rapid rate for 5 minutes, and at a reduced rate for 10 more minutes, ceasing fire then unless the signal was repeated.

A Machine Gun Barrage from 40 Guns, organised in Batteries, was to be placed on the hostile strong points such as Fokker Farm, Toronto, Otto Farm, etc. It was ordered to lift from these points just before the Artillery Barrage, then to fire on the Hannebeek Valley, subsequently lifting to a general line Bordeaux Farm, Boethoek, Gravenstafel.

Trench Mortars. Four guns were to be placed in and around Schuler Galleries with orders to conform to the Artillery Barrage, and be under the orders of the O.C. 2/7th Sherwood Foresters.

On the capture of Toronto, two guns were to move forward to that position, the remaining guns being held in reserve in Capricorn trenches.

R.F.C. The 21st Squadron R.F.C. received orders to detail a contact machine to be over the objectives at Zero plus 1 hour, plus 1½ hours, and plus 2½ hours, the most advanced Infantry lighting flares and

signalling with Watson fans when called up by Klaxon horn or lights. The usual Counter Attack Aeroplanes were to be continually in the air throughout the day from Zero plus 1 hour till dusk, being used to draw the attention of the Infantry to any sign of an Enemy Counter Attack developing by a blast on the Klaxon horn, or the discharge of a smoke bomb with white parachute flare.

Tanks. Eight Tanks were detailed for the Attack, but it was realised that the country was most unsuitable for them, and little was expected from their assistance.

Brigade Reserve. The 2/5th Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment was placed at the disposal of the Brigade Commander as a Reserve.

Battalion Battle Orders. The day of September 25th was spent resting, and strict orders were issued that no movement was to take place during day-light.

It was decided to attack on a one Company Frontage, and a definite objective or duty was assigned to each Company. "C" Company (Capt. Bampton), after passing through the 2/7th Sherwood Foresters was ordered to capture Toronto, consolidating in the best available position near that place. The Company was to move in two lines, with three platoons in the first, followed by one with Company Headquarters in support.

As there were no trenches each of the Sections assembled in shell holes, the advance being in lines of sections in file; this formation was kept as far as possible, as it was the most suitable for crossing an area pitted with shell holes, facilitating control by Commanders, and offering a poor target to the enemy Artillery.

"D" Company (Capt. Broad), had to pass through "C" at Toronto and go for the final objective, the fortified ruin of Riverside, with orders to consolidate on the most suitable line in the vicinity.

“A” Company (Capt. Lipscombe), was responsible for “Mopping up” and rendering any support that might be necessary to the two attacking Companies.

“B” Company (Lieutenant A. Heath), was in Reserve, and was ordered to garrison that portion of the Battalion Area West of the Road running East of Fokker Farm to the River Hannebeek.

Two sections apiece were detailed as carrying parties for “C” and “D” Companies, and one section performed the same duties for “A” Company.

Three Machine Guns were placed at the Commanding Officer’s disposal, two of them being sent to Toronto, and one right up with the leading Company to Riverside to assist the Lewis Guns. These Machine Guns did splendid work, suffering heavily in doing so, and as unfortunately our Reserve of these Guns with their personnel was small, and situated at some distance back, the crews could not be reinforced. Consequently all, with the exception of one gun, which was placed on the left defensive flank at the Hannebeek, had to be withdrawn.

The Regimental Aid Post was at Schuler Galleries, and also a Rifle Cleaning Shop, for which the O.C. “B” Company was responsible. The system adopted was a good one. Six sound clean rifles were kept in the shops, whilst directly any became unserviceable in the line, they were despatched by runner to the shop and changed.

Battalion Battle Headquarters were at Corn Hill. It was an extremely difficult matter to select a “Pill Box” which would not receive undue attention from the enemy, and which would stand a sporting chance with a 5.9. Hindu Cot had been thought of, and the writer is extremely grateful to 2nd Lieut. Roe for the soundness of his selection, as on the morning after the attack it was not possible to decide where Hindu Cot had been!

Dress was Fighting Order with Shovels, one pick per section being carried.

Carrying parties did not carry either of these Articles.

The usual detailed orders were issued as regards wounded, prisoners, communications, and the position of the various Dumps, with other details connected with an attack on a big scale.

The customary procedure as regards leaving a percentage of Officers and other ranks behind in the back Area was adopted, Major Duncan, with Captain C. P. Elliott and Lieutenant Macdonald, all who could be spared, being detailed as a Reserve to reorganise the Battalion in the event of heavy casualties; of the N.C.O.'s Sergeants Orton and Walker were given a rest. They had been "over the top" on practically every previous occasion.

Battle Narrative. The Battalion marched off from its Area in the old British Lines just after midnight on the night of September 25th/26th, "C" Company leading, followed by "D," "A," "B" in the order named. We had a good deal of trouble in passing the Tanks, as the road was narrow and this had to be done in single file.

These Antidiluvian Animals had a playful habit of stopping as if to allow one to pass, and then when one tried to do so, off they started again with a jerk and a grunt. It required a certain amount of agility on the part of the men, burdened as they were with their accoutrements, to avoid being run over.

It was a still clear night, and we felt that the Boche could not help hearing the loud "Expostulations" of the Tanks, and we cursed our luck at being with them. However beyond a little shelling as we passed Spree Farm nothing happened, and Battalion Headquarters received the welcome report that the 2/8th were in position by 3 a.m., the time ordered.

Battalion Headquarters was a "Pill Box" of the usual type, open of course towards the Boche, but our skilful pioneers soon had a thick wall of Sandbags between us and the enemy.

On asking our liaison Artillery Officer if our new home would resist a 5.9 he replied that it was a toss up!

The bombardment of the German positions opened punctually to time namely at 3.50 a.m., only to be answered within 8 minutes by the German Guns.

There was a thick fog which made Communication and the subsequent advance very difficult.

"C" and "D" Companies, whilst waiting for Zero, which it will be remembered was at 5.50 a.m., came in for a certain amount of shelling. "C" Company's Headquarters were buried by a 5.9, but during this time these Companies were lucky and suffered little, not a single man at Company Headquarters being actually hit.

"A" just behind them were not so fortunate, and both they and "B" lost several men.

A rum ration was served out just before Zero, and at last the trying time of waiting was over, and our creeping Barrage started.

The 2/7th, who had formed up just behind Schuler Galleries, took their objectives in workmanlike fashion, and our Companies passed safely through them, though Officers with the 2/8th said it was impossible to see or hear owing to the fog and the din of the Barrage.

A most interesting point was mentioned by several, who stated that the German Barrage, moved backwards, after the advance started, following our Barrage as nearly as possible.

A clever bit of work which was responsible for heavy losses amongst our men.

"C," the leading Company, before passing through the 2/7th had lost 1 section and a few odd men, but had on the whole been so far fortunate, though they had lost their 2nd in Command, Lieut. Jones, who was severely wounded. They got up close behind the Barrage and speedily took Toronto, their objective, consolidating a line slightly in advance of that place. A few prisoners were taken, but it speedily became evident that the enemy were relying chiefly on their efficient Machine Gun Corps and excellent Artillery for defence, and that the Groups of "Pill Boxes" were not occupied by a large number of men.

From now onward a searching oblique Machine Gun fire was directed on the advancing 2/8th, both from the right front, and apparently from Abraham Heights. Men were falling fast, but the Battalion held steadily on, many of them smoking, and laughing when they successfully extricated comrades from the holding mud, which in several places was up to the thighs, or from the attentions of a shell which had buried them.

“D” Company, passing rapidly through the leaders met with ground in the worst possible condition, but their Captain had carefully checked his compass bearings, and with the aid of these and his map he made no mistake in direction, successfully storming Riverside.

Shortly afterwards Captain Broad was wounded, and being obliged to hand over his command, instructed 2nd Lieutenant Rounds to consolidate the position. This was done, with the few men left—only about a dozen. Reinforcements were necessary, so this young Officer with great gallantry went back under heavy fire to “A” Company, which had now lost all its Officers, to explain the situation and bring up reinforcements to the front line. He successfully accomplished this and held the position under great difficulties, establishing touch with the troops on his flanks, on the left after considerable difficulty, as the 58th Division was some distance behind our line.

“A” Company, which was third in the advance, suffered very heavily before passing through the 2/7th, practically the whole of No. 3 platoon being wiped out, whilst to make matters worse Company Headquarters suffered the same fate at the same time, with the fortunate exception of Captain Lipscombe the Commander. This Officer, although he had been wounded in the knee before the advance started and was suffering from a torn cartilage, pluckily stuck to his post, and survived long enough to see his Company through Toronto, but shortly afterwards he fell severely wounded by a large fragment of shell.

The other Officers of the Company all became casualties, and what were left moved forward to reinforce “D,”

assisting in consolidating the front line, and in forming a defensive left flank on the line of the Hannebeek.

"B" Company, though heavily hit, had carried out their duties successfully, the carrying parties succeeding in reaching the front line. Deficiencies in Ammunition were made up by collecting from the killed and wounded.

The Counter Attack. The enemy delivered a heavy counter attack on our position during the evening of the 26th. Our S.O.S. went up promptly, and in reply the Artillery put down a magnificent Barrage. The din was deafening, the Barrage presenting the appearance of a high thick and impenetrable brown wall. We, who saw it, formed the opinion that nothing could pass through it alive.

Owing to the S.O.S. signal being repeated the Barrage continued for no less than one hour and a quarter, the liaison Artillery Officer attached to the 2/8th telling the C.O. that more shells had been fired by our Artillery on September 26th than on any day during the war.

Our Officers in the front line stated that the ground beyond the Hannebeek was black with the enemy before the barrage started, but that they all seemed to "melt away" under its deadly effect.

Situation after Counter Attack. Confidence was now felt that we could hold the line we had taken, more especially as our left flank, which was in the air, was well protected by the Hannebeek which had been churned up by shells into an almost impenetrable morass. Nevertheless the Battalion had lost terribly. There were only two Company Officers left, and senior N.C.O's were practically non existent. Under these circumstances Colonel Oates obtained permission to draw on his Reserves, and sent in to the line Captain C. P. Elliott, Lieutenant MacDonald, and Lieutenant G. G. Elliot the Signalling Officer, who gallantly offered his services for front line work. This strengthened the position, which had been further weakened by the collapse of 2nd Lieut. R. W. Rounds, who was suffering from severe shell shock.

Some tact had to be exercised to get him out of the line, and success was only achieved by informing him that the enemy "were over there" pointing to the rear—a gallant youngster indeed!

Colonel Oates, on visiting the line found Captain C. P. Elliott suffering from shock and Lieutenant Heath in the same condition, so he arranged that a runner should be sent up to Battalion Headquarters if either of these Officers were hit or unable to carry on.

He found the men wonderfully bright and cheery, and very naturally not a little proud of what they had done.

He and his guide had not proceeded far on the return journey when the Boche started his "morning hate," and it was with dire forebodings that he reached Battalion Headquarters, after a hurried visit to the Brigade Office to give a verbal report on the state of affairs in the line.

Arrived back at Corn Hill the C.O. found a runner from the front line awaiting him with the news that both Captain Elliott and Lieutenant Heath had been buried by shells, and were unfit to remain in the trenches, and as this only left Lieutenants Macdonald and G. G. Elliot in the line Colonel Oates sent in the Adjutant, Captain Quibell, to take command, and also 2nd Lieutenant Cook, the Intelligence Officer.

This disposed of all the available Officers except the 2nd in command, who of course was held in reserve in case the C.O. should be hit.

The Sergt. Sergt. Major King, the Battalion Sergt.
Major as Major was, to his surprise, awakened and
Adjutant. told that he had to act as Adjutant.

2nd Lieutenant Cook had only been in the line twenty minutes when a shell carried away his hand and wrist. Fortunately there were no more casualties amongst the Officers, and many lives were saved by the careful handling of his force by Captain Quibell. He moved the men always forward, immediately shelling of

the position commenced, three or four men crawling out to each shell hole.

The Shell Hole system. This system of holding and consolidating shell holes was entirely adopted in the front line, and on the defensive flank, and was most successful. The shell holes were within hearing distance of each other, but were not linked up, and try as he would by the aid of his low flying aeroplanes, whose machine guns were continually searching every likely spot, the Boche was never really sure of our position.

There was a short trench at Toronto, which was used for resting the men, who moved forward as described if shelling became heavy; the front line was relieved every twenty-four hours.

This system made the distribution of rations more difficult, and there was always a certain amount of noise during the process, which took place of course during the hours of darkness, but our Transport Officer, Quarter Master, and the different Quartermaster Sergeants worked wonders, and managed to get up hot tea and rum regularly, commencing on the night of the 26th.

Transport system in Ypres Area. It may be mentioned here that all Rations, Ammunition and Stores had to be brought up on pack ponies for the first half of the journey, and thence forward in Yukon Packs, in the loading and carrying of which the men had received a considerable amount of training when out of the line.

The Yukon Pack. The correct attitude to be adopted when carrying one of these packs nearly resembled that of an indigent beggar of some seventy or eighty years of age. The bent back, long thick stick and slouching gait of the aged mendicant were evidently indispensable to the successful carrying of the heavy weight in the packs. "Tommy" quickly tumbled to the joke, and speedily began to supply the disreputable hat and clothes necessary for the part if he got the chance!

There is nothing he likes better than losing his helmet or some article of clothing, as an excuse for arraying himself in more comfortable head gear or wearing apparel!

In Flanders "Duck Boards," whose position was well known to the enemy, had to be used in the forward Areas. They were systematically and accurately shelled during the nights.

Corn Hill, our Battalion Headquarters, held out gallantly to the end; it was regularly shelled twice a day, the first projectile, always a 5.9, invariably fell a few yards short, the second usually "plumped" into a huge crater, full of water, just behind us, whilst the third generally hit the "Pill Box" somewhere, but it never succeeded in hitting a wall or roof in the middle, and beyond putting the lights out and giving us a good shaking did no harm. On one occasion the Adjutant and another Officer were just outside the entrance to Battalion Headquarters when a big shell pitched in our "little lake." Both Officers were floored

A Bath. and drenched to the skin by the huge column of water which descended on them like a water spout.

Our Headquarters were much more lucky than the 2/6th into whose post a shell penetrated and burst, killing the Adjutant and wounding the C.O.

Relief at last. It is usual to relieve a Battalion within 36 hours after an attack, if possible, but the

Division of New Zealanders, who were to take our place, had not arrived as early as expected. Consequently immediate relief was out of the question, but anxious to give the Battalion a rest, our Brigadier arranged for the 2/6th Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment to relieve us for one night prior to the arrival of the New Zealanders.

Very delightful was the news, and no annoying counter attack interfering to prevent it, the relief was safely completed and the Battalion marched off at 11 p.m. on the 28th.

We had just cleared Spree Farm when the road behind us was heavily shelled, no doubt "on spec." Later on the Battalion was not so lucky, as shortly before our arrival at our destination, Corps Reserve Trenches, near Wieltje, the enemy put down a very heavy gas shell Bombardment, probably meant for the Artillery, but falling with deadly accuracy amongst the Battalion. Box Respirators were put on at once, but several men were caught.

**Heavy Gas
Shell**

Bombardment.

On arrival at the lines intended for us, it was found that they were occupied by another Battalion, so Officers and men had to make shift as best

they could. Unfortunately another heavy dose of mustard gas shell was put down during the night with disastrous results, as although the sentries did their best to find and awaken the men, they were so sound asleep and so scattered for the reasons mentioned that an alarming casualty list was the result, about 100 cases coming before the M.O. next day. The symptoms were painful in the extreme both to patients and onlookers, and made one anxious to throttle the brute who invented the fiendish compound. Alas many of these men never recovered. One of the worst cases was that of Sergeant Orton, who had not been in the line, but had incautiously sniffed the clothes of a man who had been gassed.

Vlamertinghe. At 11.30 a.m. on the 29th September, what was left of the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters marched to Vlamertinghe, but the enemy had not yet done with it. It had been glorious weather all through the push, and there was now a full moon which just suited the Gothas.

Gothas. They took full advantage of this, and bombed all the surrounding camps.

One bomb fell within 40 yards of the C.O.'s and Adjutant's tents, which were some distance in front of the Battalion; the former was asleep, so the 23 little holes in the canvas walls of the tent did not alarm him till next day!

The Adjutant fortunately was out late to Dinner ; his tent pole was split, his Sam Brown belt cut nearly in two, and his " British Warm," never by the way a beauty, rendered at last **quite irreparable**; there was much ribald merriment over this!

Our The next day was spent resting and also
Casualties. counting the cost; and a terrible one it was to contemplate. 2 Officers, 2nd Lieutenants Roe and Hadden and 78 other ranks were killed, and no less than 15 Officers and 422 other ranks were wounded, gassed and missing. "C" Company had the heaviest casualties, namely all its Officers and 146 other ranks, then came "D" with 132 other ranks, whilst "A" had 124 and "B" 98.

Of the 15 Officers wounded, etc., Captains Broad, Bampton and Lipscombe, Lieutenant Jones and 2nd Lieutenants Lewis, Mellows, Charlesworth, Smith Cooper, Hough, Hayhoe and Cook were all more or less seriously wounded, Lieutenant and Quartermaster Mr. G. Shumach was gassed, and Lieutenant A. Heath and 2nd Lieutenant Rounds were suffering from very severe shell shock, and were much against their will coaxed away to Hospital.

It is noteworthy that all the 14 Officers who went over the top on September 26th were casualties.

There were 49 men missing, and these in course of time were nearly all accounted for, and were either killed or wounded. Many had passed through other dressing stations, and others alas had simply been killed and buried unknown to their comrades. Orders had come through from the Brigade that all men, who in the confusion of the battle had lost their Battalions, and fought with other units, were to return to those to which they belonged. It was the proud boast of the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters that they had no man returned to them.

Not a man had strayed from his unit!

To give some idea of the confusion which exists in a great battle we, although we were the left unit of the

Division, had quite a number of men fighting with us from the right Brigade.

Out at Rest. On October 1st the Brigade moved off towards the Aire area by train, No. 1 tactical train conveying the following Battalions, which had now been reinforced by their noncombatants.

2/5th Sherwood Foresters 14 Officers, 438 other Ranks—452. 2/7th Sherwood Foresters 12 Officers, 381 other Ranks—393. 2/8th Sherwood Foresters 6 Officers, 264 other Ranks—270, making a total of 1,117, a fairly heavy load for one train, and necessitating slow progress.

The journey was tedious in the extreme, as though the men reached the station at 6 a.m., they had to wait 2½ hours for the arrival of the train.

Steinbecque. On detraining at Steinbecque it was found that the 2/8th had to march 7 miles, and they did not reach their destination, the small villages of Neufpré and Pecuer until 4 p.m., the cooks and watercarts, which had travelled on the 2nd and 3rd trains respectively arriving late at night.

Our Transport, which had come by road did not reach us till 6 a.m. next morning.

On October 2nd General Stansfeld visited the different Battalions informally, very considerably sending a message to the effect that he did not wish the men to fall in or be fully dressed before his arrival.

He came just before lunch, saw each Company separately, and made an appreciative speech to them in their own lines. Afterwards he and his Staff had lunch with the Officers of the Battalion.

Divisional Conference. On the following day, there was a long Conference of C.O.'s, lasting 2½ hours, at Divisional Headquarters to discuss various points connected with the attack, in order to correct and improve upon any of our methods, which might require it.

The Commanding Officers all agreed that, given the same Artillery support, the objectives could have been taken with fewer men. It is easy to be wise after the event. The main difficulty which we had to overcome was to get supports through the Enemy Counter Barrage, should they be required, and it was deemed wise by all the C.O.'s to get them through before this was put down.

Immediately after lunch, which was hurriedly partaken of, C.O.'s joined their Battalions, moving them off to the ground selected for a

Complimentary Divisional Parade. The 2/8th were
Parade by a tiny band, reduced in numbers to
General Romer. under 100 men fit for parade. The

Brigade Bandmaster very kindly paid the Battalion a nice compliment by playing the Battalion march past "I'm 95," as they came on to parade, materially assisting it over some rather uneven ground.

On arrival General Romer thanked the Brigade very warmly for what they had done, especially praising the 2/7th and 2/8th Battalions, his speech as usual being very helpful in correcting any minor mistakes that had been made.

Honours. It was now time to consider recommendations for honours, and the Commanding Officer had a peculiarly difficult task before him, due to the fact that most of the Officers and N.C.O.'s had been put out of action early in the battle, and there were consequently few able to write a clear and connected report on any particular act of gallantry. Private soldiers are generally rather shy of talking of these things. Where all had done so well it was difficult to make selections, especially when the bad light, during which the action was fought, is considered. All the Officers, who sent in reports, said the same thing, "The men were simply splendid."

They required no leading and little handling.

The best proof of this is the fact that, in spite of the loss of nearly all those to whom they looked for orders, they took the last objective, and held it until relieved.

There were however some Officers and men whose claims to honours were obvious.

Captain C. P. Elliott had been "over the top" nearly every time with the Battalion, commencing with Dublin. It was largely due to his cool courage at a critical time that the position was consolidated and held. He received a well earned Military Cross.

Lieutenant G. G. Elliot, the Signalling Officer, by his utter absence of fear and cheerful demeanour during the most trying circumstances deservedly obtained the same reward.

2nd Lieutenant R. W. Rounds' gallantry has already been commented on; he received a similar decoration.

Sergeant Clay handled his platoon with great skill and initiative when all his Officers were down. No. 6088 Private G. Jacques and No. 306188 Pte. W. Beardsall each obtained the Military Medal. Of Jacques his Company Commander wrote, "Jacques was here, there and everywhere, and was the life of the Attack."

Beardsall, with splendid initiative took command of his platoon when all his Officers and N.C.O.'s were casualties. There were no doubt numerous other acts of gallantry, some unseen, and others not brought to the notice of the Commanding Officer.

So ended our part in the Great Battle, a part of which every member of the Battalion has a right to be proud, and one which will ever be gratefully remembered by the Commanding Officer.

His sorrow at leaving the Battalion, temporarily as it was believed, was softened by the receipt of two charming letters from General Romer the Divisional Commander, and General Stansfeld, the Brigadier.

He will be pardoned if he reproduces some portions of these, in so far as they refer to the Battalion of which he is so proud.

General Romer wrote, * * * "Your Battalion has always been one of the best in the Division, and it must be a great pride to you that you finished up with such a fine performance as that of September 26th—29th."

General Stansfeld wrote, " Your rest could not have come at a better time, i.e., after you have just led your Battalion in and out of a most successful action."

Before leaving the Commanding Officer issued the following Special Order of the Day:

SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY

BY

LIEUT.-COLONEL W. COAPE OATES.

COMMANDING 2/8TH BATTALION

SHERWOOD FORESTERS.

2nd October, 1917.

The Commanding Officer wishes to again congratulate all Ranks on their gallantry during the recent battle; he has always felt absolute confidence in the Battalion for the three years during which he has had the honour to command it, and he wishes again to thank everyone from the bottom of his heart for what they have done.

(SD.) A. H. QUIBELL,

CAPT. AND ADJT.

CHAPTER XV.

SPORT WITH THE 2/8TH SHERWOOD FORESTERS

BY

CAPTAIN W. N. WRIGHT.

As I have been asked to write a short account of Sport enjoyed in France with the 2/8th Battalion, I don't think I can do better than first give my bag for the twelve months out there, and then show how it was secured. Looking through my Diary I find mention of twelve and a half brace of foxes, nine badgers, six hares, one rabbit and sixteen brace of partridges.

I will take the last item first. When the Battalion was resting at Le Mesnil in August, 1917, it was one of my duties to supply the Commanding Officer with Game whenever possible, and as we had no guns at that time the only alternative was to catch partridges with the aid of horse and hound. A lot has been written at various times about the rough country that is ridden over in India, pigsticking, but I very much doubt whether the worst of it could compare with our hunting ground round Le Mesnil. It was on the outskirts of the Sailly-Saillisell Battlefield, and the shell holes, which pitted the ground every few yards, were enough in themselves to satisfy the most ardent pigsticker, but to add to our difficulties they were at that time of the year for the most part completely hidden from view by a luxuriant growth of poppies and thistles.

The only hound I had at this time belonged to a very good friend of the Battalion, Major Coe, our

A.D.V.S., and was a harrier standing about 20½ inches at the shoulder. He may have had a cross of pointer blood in him, but probably not, as he was a white and lemon pied colour and had no liver markings at all. In fact he looked just like an old English harrier that is still to be seen in the Cotley and Axe Vale packs. The great majority of cross bred hounds in France had some liver markings on them, and these are a sure sign of the pointer cross. Bill, our hound, had a first-rate nose and a wonderful turn of speed.

Riding down Partridges. I usually took 3 or 4 mounted transport men with me when we were out after partridges, and as soon as Bill had found and flushed a covey we had to gallop after it, keeping it in view till the birds settled again. This sounds comparatively simple, but, in reality, in that wide undulating country, absolutely devoid of fences and trees and all covered with high thistles, it was very hard to mark a covey down at all accurately, and very often it would be five or six minutes before Bill worked up to them and flushed them again. Usually after the third flight the covey became split up, and it was then time to concentrate on a single bird. If all went well a young bird usually came to hand after the fourth flight, always supposing a fresh covey did not cause complications, but the old bird would get up six or seven times before getting beat.

Twice I picked up alive an old cock partridge that was squatting on a perfectly bare patch of ground, but in each case the bird had been flushed seven times, and it was, moreover, a very hot day. More usually the hound would catch them himself. We marked one young bird down into an old German trench, and eventually Bill after hunting along it for a hundred yards or more dived down into a dug-out, and presently reappeared with the bird in his mouth. Another, an old bird, with a favouring wind made nearly a three mile point, being flushed close to our transport lines and eventually reaching the field at Etricourt on the banks of the Canal du Nord where the Corps Commander kept his two milch cows.

The best Day. On our best day we caught two brace of birds before tea, and then, after tea, had perhaps the sternest chase I have ever seen in any country, after an old jack hare—17 minutes at top pace over that awful country being enough to shake off the other six horsemen and even the hound. The hare quickly crossed the Le Mesnil road and was then of course among the shell holes and thistles, and only occasionally in view for a brief moment. However all went well and we never made a wrong turn, and though he twice went through an old belt of German wire there was a track for the horses, but by the time he reached Four Winds Farm and the race course he had drawn away from all except my mare, “The Nunn.”

The pace however, was beginning to tell, and as soon as he reached the thistles just beyond the straight he lay down. Three times he tried this dodge, each time turning very short, but the Nunn never took her eyes off him, and turned with him, and the fourth time I jumped off and fell on him. Pte. Ancliffe on Lady Angelina was the first to come up after I had blown “La Morte.”

The fact that $11\frac{1}{2}$ brace of partridges were caught in 3 weeks, and I never had a fall reflects the greatest credit on “Templecombe” and “The Nunn,” and only shows what a horse can do when left entirely alone on rough ground.

Two Brigade Race Meetings were held at this time. Our Brigade, of course, were the first to hold a Meeting, and a very good course was laid out at Four Winds Farm. The 2/8th horses did extremely well, and out of the six races on the card (four on the flat and two over a country) won three, were second in two, and third in another.

“Templecombe” (5 years) won the Rufford Plate and was second to “Okeover” (S. Avilla up) in the Curragh Plate. “The Nunn” won the South Notts. Steeplechase. “Joe” (one of our only two mules and well ridden by Pte. Wright), won the Mule Race from twenty-five others.

" The Rat " (Lieut. Imison) and " Lady Angelina " were second and third respectively in the Pack Pony Race. Altogether it was a thoroughly good afternoon's sport, and most of the Battalion made money, particularly the Transport Men who had backed " Joe," the mule, at sixes!

" Templecombe." Three weeks later at the Lincoln and Leicester Brigade Meeting, "Templecombe," who was by then quite fit, was brought out for both open races. The first, The Offa Steeplechase, was probably the best race of either Meeting and though " Okeover " (Captain de Crespigny up) and " Charlie " (General Cope up) led over the last fence, the pony was full of running and won a capital race by $1\frac{1}{2}$ lengths. He also won the last race of the day the Carholm Plate (one mile on the flat) quite comfortably, Major Tallents on " The Gunner," and General Stansfeld on " Huntsman " filling the other places.

It is satisfactory to know that " Templecombe " survived the whole campaign, and is now up among the stonewalls of North Derbyshire.

Soon after this last Meeting the Division moved North for the third attack on the Passchendaele Ridge, and except for a little coarse fishing in Belgium, and a good badger dig near Chateau de la Haie (after taking over from the Canadians) there is little sport to chronicle for a time. After the Cambrai attack and the strenuous three weeks following, the Division went back into rest round Le Cauroy, and on Xmas Day the Transport trekked thirty miles under the worst possible conditions, as the roads passed over were either sheets of ice, or covered in snow drifts, in places axle high. It speaks volumes for the stamina and condition of our own transport horses that not one of them ever offered to jib, and this, despite the fact that no frost nails had been issued, and that towards the end of our fifteen hours trek three very steep hills, covered in ice, had to be climbed. As if this was not enough to try the best of horses, the Transport immediately in front of us kept stopping on the hills. It was good to see every horse clean up his feed that night at the end of the journey.

2/8th Transport Horses. It is interesting to note that forty of our horses came to the Battalion at Luton, in the Spring of 1915, straight from board ship. The great majority of them were of the Percheron-Clydesdale cross, which undoubtedly results in the best type of light-draught horse procurable. Most of them were blacks with rather heavy crests. These horses went through the Irish Rebellion, travelled over a great part of Ireland on Mobile Column work, and when the Division was about to return to England, were handed over to our Artillery. Thanks, however, to General Sandbach we were allowed to have them back again in England, and the Gunners were so loth to part with them that I had to be sent to Larkhill Camp to identify and bring them back. Arrived there I found them hidden away in ones and twos all over the many horse lines, but got them all together again!

We were the only Battalion to do this and scored enormously by so doing, as these horses had two years hard condition on them. The result was that when the Germans retired in the Spring of 1917, and for three weeks supplies were very short, and work very hard, not a single horse belonging to the Battalion went even thin, though many other Units quickly got down to 50 per cent. of their horse strength through debility.

Without doubt, also, the foraging capabilities of Sergeant Merrin and his men helped things on a great deal at this time.

Hunting at the Front. In the Le Cauroy district there was a plentiful supply of foxes, and thanks to the efforts of Privates Ancliff, Cox and Blood, Lance-Corporal Hutchby, and others, we were seldom short of a fox. At this time, I had got together six couples of French hounds of which Bill (now re-named Galway) was one.

Another, Whalebone by name, came from Frevent, and was a great strong dog hound of 24 inches, who could kill a fox single-handed with the greatest of ease. The most surprising member of the Pack however was "Gallant," a very good looking setter from Souchez

under Vimy Ridge. No hunt was too fast or long for him, and on one occasion when we had run a fox to ground and dislodged him, he singled himself out from the pack, and pulled his fox down in first rate style. Our first hunt of any note followed a meet of hounds at Canettemont. Among a field of 30 or more horsemen were Generals Romer, Stansfeld and Cope and all four C.O.'s of our Brigade.

Finding in a ravine hounds ran at a fair pace to Houvin, where they checked, not so, however, some of the horsemen, the Brigade Major, Master of the Sparkford Vale when at home, and the Transport Officer of the 2/6th Battalion, being run away with, while later in the day the Adjutant of the 2/5th was taken charge of, and was last seen disappearing in the direction of Magnicourt.

A holloa forward soon put the hounds right again, and they hunted through the chateau grounds gradually improving their pace as they travelled the length of the big wood over several jumps before swinging left-handed past Magnicourt, to kill their fox in the open near Moncheaux. This fox's mask was destined for New York after being presented to the American doctor attached to the 2/5th, who was duly blooded. Another good hunt was from Sars le Bois to Ambrines, Bois de Faye, Dernier, Berlincourt, and eventually to Le Cauroy Wood, and out across the football ground where Whalebone singled himself out from the pack and coursed his fox for half a mile before pulling him down. Colonel Gorton, G.S.O.1, had this mask.

The Run of the Season. About this time there were several good hunts, plenty of foxes being killed, and one run to ground, but undoubtedly the best hunt of all took place just before the Battalion was disbanded. Again the meet was at Canettemont, but this time hounds found their fox in the Big Wood, and ran a ring round it before forcing him out into the open up an enormously high and steep bank. Once up it however, a grand galloping ground was spread out in front of us, and better still hounds could be seen racing away almost mute two hundred yards ahead. Three

or four big drop banks helped to steady the field who were very much on the ride, and hounds were well ahead when they entered Canettemont Little Wood. They drove their fox the whole length of this covert without a check and out into the open again on the North side, and the Le Cauroy river, a good trout stream, now came in our line. Fortunately however the fox turned back from it, as it was in flood, and climbed the big bank that had stopped many of the field the week before. The line lay through the farmyard on top, and there was a slight check there, but I held hounds forward, and they quickly picked it up again and hunted on at a fair pace to the snug little ravine under Big Wood. Here our fox must have waited as hounds, all at once, started to race, and travelling the length of the ravine, were soon out in the open again. It was the fox's last effort however, and after another mile hounds pulled him down in the open.

He proved to be quite the biggest dog fox we killed in France, and weighed about seventeen pounds, and judging from his very worn teeth was six or seven years old.

The gallop had lasted forty eight minutes, and several horses came to a dead stop before the end.

Badgers. The first Badger I saw in France was near Roissel one evening in May. I was riding round with Private Devereaux, looking for a fox earth, when he suddenly shouted out that there was a "large bitch fox!" Coming out of the coppice I saw an old sow badger going across the open, and riding after her easily caught her up and bagged her. This is the only occasion on which I have seen a badger in the open, except when out with hounds. She had undoubtedly come from an earth near by which we had dug the night before, and got a vixen and cub from. I did not find the boar till a fortnight later, when he was located in a single hole in a very high chalk bank.

We did not start till six in the evening and dug all through the night and the following day till 9 p.m. (27 hours in all).

It was a gorgeous night and not a sound to be heard except two nightingales quite close to us, and a lot of

frogs in the river near by. Yet not three miles away Verrey lights were going up every few minutes. We had only one terrier, little one-eyed Mickie, about the best dog I ever dug to. He never seemed to tire however long the dig, and, though he never let his badger shift about much, hardly ever got bitten. He weighed just fourteen pounds and stood thirteen inches at the shoulder. He had a small old fashioned head and was a bit bandy legged and broad at the chest, probably due to a strain of bull terrier.

We eventually got our badger at a depth of fourteen feet well out into the field, having had to sink down from above to reach him.

The next badger came from Vallulart Wood, behind Havrincourt Wood, and that was another night dig, though nothing like as long, as Private Ancliff only found the earth just as it was getting dusk. It was close to our horse lines, and we started straight away and dug through the night, eventually bagging our third badger just as dawn was breaking.

The next came from the big wood that runs down to the Canal du Nord near Etricourt. It is a tremendously thick wood, and holds quite a lot of Roe deer, though at that time of year, August, they were seldom to be seen. I had set out in the afternoon with Privates Ancliff and Blood and "Mickie," resolved to find something to dig and after an hour's struggling through briers and bracken at last found an earth, and before long heard Mickie baying his game. I shall never forget the horse flies and gadflies in this wood—they were there in their millions, and long before this I had had to send the horses back. The earth had one entrance in an old German gun pit, and probably had only recently been re-opened. At first Mickie was baying a fox and we seemed to be in for a nice shallow dig, but after we had broken into the hole he started scratching as if he wanted to get deeper, so we dug down another two feet and dropped into a much bigger pipe. Here it was that Ancliff put his arm in to see which way the hole ran, and was promptly bitten right through his little finger by a badger.

This was very satisfactory for us, at any rate, as we knew we were close to our quarry, and after another hour we bagged him, an old boar weighing thirty-five pounds.

We dug a brace of Badgers in Bouvigny Wood, which is on a spur that runs up to Vimy Ridge. It is a beech wood and at that time of year (October) the trees were at their best. It was a very big place, but we went prepared for an all night sitting with plenty of food and drink, and kept a good fire going during the night. We made our final sink just before dawn, and by the light of a candle I could see a badger up the pipe. I put the candle down in the hole while we enlarged our sink a bit, and we were busy doing this when out bolted not one but two large badgers, who put out the candle as they came, but luckily could not get up the sides of the sink which were over six feet deep. Mickie of course jumped down into the fray and then followed one of the most exciting five minutes I have ever had. Ancliff was in the sink with me and started laying about him with a spade, making better practise on my legs than on the badger. The men on top all seemed to be yelling at the top of their voices, and the badgers were trying to jump up the sides of the pit and running between our legs. It was still too dark to distinguish a badger's head from his tail, consequently I could not tail him. Eventually, however, one of the badgers retreated up the pipe and we were able to concentrate on the other and after a bit bagged him. It was then a simple matter to bag the other which we did just as dawn was breaking.

The next Badger dig was near Houvin, and on this occasion we had a second terrier who was brought to help us by old Pierre, the village poacher, who knew every earth within miles. He was a wonderful old man, sixty-four years of age, hard as nails and at heart a great sportsman, though I am afraid he considered anything less than at least three birds a very poor result for one cartridge. He told me had seen his first badger dug in this same earth forty-nine years ago.

It was, as usual, in a steep chalk bank, and we had to sink well over twelve feet each time to get down to the

pipe, consequently we did not draw the badger till just after midnight. Nevertheless, though there was deep snow on the ground, and it was freezing very hard old Pierre and several grandchildren stayed with us till the end. The dog he brought with him, "Froggie," proved a real hard beggar, though till now he had spent the four years of his life on a chain. He went straight up to his badger when we dug up to him, and fought as I have never seen a dog fight before or since. I was lying in a tunnel we had made, fourteen feet into the bank, and could see the terriers and badgers with the help of a candle. Once the badger backed out over me, but I was too cramped to be able to tail him then.

Next day there was awful trouble as it appeared that Pierre had taken the dog without leave, and his owner, an old lady, was furious as naturally the dog was badly marked. She would not sell him then, however, but the following day as he was rather sick and sorry for himself she sold him to me for fifty francs, quite thinking he would die. Needless to say he was all right again by the end of the week, and has done much good work for me since, both at home and in France. This year he accounted for several badgers in the Belvoir Country and the last time I put him to ground was in Kneesal Wood, cubbing with the Rufford hounds, when he drew a fox, also a terrier who had got the fox by his brush quite ten yards down a drain, in less than a minute. As if to prove his nationality he caught and ate a frog only a week or two ago!

CHAPTER XVI.

LENS.

BY

CAPTAIN J. S. C. OATES, D.S.O., M.C.

It will be remembered that on October 1st the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters had left the Ypres area and moved by train to Neufpré, a long and straggling village between Steenbecque and Aire. Billets were much as usual, but a veritable haven of rest after the strain of the last week or so. For five days the Battalion rested and re-fitted, and by the end of that time was more or less its old self.

C.O. One serious loss was incurred here. The

Invalided. C.O., who had been slightly gassed, unfortunately caught P.U.O., and the two together brought about a serious illness. He was evacuated, and invalided to England within a few days. It will be remembered that he had commanded since the formation of the Battalion, and his absence was a personal loss to all who had served under him.

A further move back, to the Bomy area, was made on the 6th inst., the Battalion, now under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Duncan, M.C., being accommodated in the village of Dennebroucque. The stay here was short and chiefly noticeable for the amount of rain that fell. Several Officers, who incautiously went fishing in the local trout stream, contracted severe colds!

Move to Four days later the whole division moved
Petit Eastward towards Lens, bivouacing one
Servins. night on the line of march. On the 10th, the Battalion reached Petit Servins, and

was there billeted. In a very short time the news got about that the 1/8th Battalion was in rest at Mazingarbe, only a few miles to the North, and many Officers and men got permission to visit their friends of the first line. The compliment was speedily returned.

It was understood that the 59th Division was to relieve some of the Canadians, who were to move North to Ypres, whence we had just come. The Stafford Brigade went in the line first, the Lincolns and Leicesters being in support, and the Sherwood Foresters in divisional reserve near Divisional Headquarters at the Chateau de la Haie.

About the 16th the 2/8th moved up to Alberta Camp in support. This was a Nissen hutted camp just West of Souchez and within sight of the ruins of Ablain St. Nazaire; the other units of the Brigade were accommodated in neighbouring camps.

Reinforcements. During all this time reinforcements, to replace the Ypres casualties, kept coming in, and the battalion was made up to strength, both in Officers and men.

"A" Company was now commanded by A/Captain G. R. Macdonald; "B" Company by A/Captain C. P. Elliott; "C" Company by Major F. G. Cursham; and "D" Company A/Captain J. R. Wardle. The new Officers who joined were a host in themselves, and their names are given below:—

Lieutenant W. A. Lee, Lieutenant C. Bullen-Smith, 2nd Lieutenants A. C. Robinson, W. J. Winter, A. W. Oxford, A. E. Hill, L. F. Buxton, C. M. Wright, A. W. Willis, S. Mycock, T. C. Pooke, C. G. Haslam, S. C. Rayment, E. Harris, J. W. Jago, W. Middleton, W. W. Hacking, A. W. Brooks, E. Emblem, A. C. Jackson, C. R. Brandreth and D. Brown. Lieutenant Bullen-Smith was an old cavalryman, and speedily assumed the position of Battalion Transport Officer, vice Captain Wright, who was serving on Brigade Headquarters Staff. 2nd Lieut. Willis proved himself to be a very efficient Intelligence Officer.

The four days divisional support were mainly occupied in preparation for going into the line. All the Officers and many N.C.O.'s had ample opportunity for reconnaissance.

Brigade support at La Coulotte. The next move forward was on the 21st October, the Battalion relieving the 2/5th Lincolns in brigade support about La Coulotte. The companies were widely scattered, but comfortable—dug-out accommodation being good and enemy shelling very light.

Battalion Headquarters as usual, came off best, taking possession of Piano dug-out, formerly owned by the Boche. It was wainscotted in a way that would have disgraced no Park Lane mansion; but the piano had gone with the Canadians. The only crab about the place was its bad ventilation, a small matter which can scarcely have troubled the Boche.

The Battalion remained here for eight days, chiefly remarkable for rain. In spite of this, and the proximity of Brigade Headquarters, all ranks remained cheerful, for were not the rations delivered each night by light railway? Great care had to be taken as to movement by day, as the ground was under direct enemy observation. Repeated warnings were issued about showing, or rather not showing, smoke, and thereby hangs a tale. One afternoon the 2nd in Command was returning to Battalion Headquarters from La Coulotte, when he was horrified to see clouds of smoke ascending at no great distance. Fearing that some too zealous company cook was responsible, he hurriedly tracked it down, to find it issuing from Brigade Headquarters Officers' Mess Cook-house. Owing to its august source he forebore to say anything, and on return to Battalion Headquarters found a "chit" from the Brigade intimating that the 8th were making too much smoke! The C.O., I believe, spent a very happy half hour composing an answer to this message!

The Front Line. The Brigade held a two Battalion frontage running through the Northern outskirts of Avion, a suburb of Lens. The left sector,

at present held by the 6th Battalion, was bounded to the North-west by the Canal de Lens, and on the South-east by Fosse 4. This line was to be taken over by the 8th on the night of the 29th/30th October. The position was peculiar, and merits some detailed description, as it was the first of its kind that the Battalion had met.

Battalion Headquarters were established in the brewery vaults of La Coulotte, and a reserve company, "A," remained with them. The sector was divided into two company sub-sectors, of which "C" Company occupied the left, and "B" the right. The right sub-sector was fed by the main C.T., Glucus, and the left by a tributary called Columbia. The support company ("D" Company) to both these sub-sectors was concealed in the Southern ruins of Avion. The left sub-sector was a double convex line of trenches, known as the Eleu system, and covering the open country between the canal and Avion. It was sited on slightly rising ground, and further was protected by floods, but was badly overlooked at close range by the Cité du Moulin. The right sub-sector was by far the most difficult, as it was impossible to hold it by anything like a continuous trench line.

Ruins made digging hard, and restricted the field of fire. Actually four or five small posts and a short length of trench constituted the front line. The whole of Avion generally came in for considerable attention from the Boche guns, and was heavily trench mortared as well.

This, briefly described, was the line taken over by the Battalion. The relief was safely carried out, and everyone settled down to eight days line-holding. As a matter of fact, though we suffered few casualties in this time, it was far from being devoid of incident.

Naval Operations. To begin with, O.C. "C" Company reported seeing a two funnelled launch on the canal, supporting this assertion with a wealth of detail, and even the exact calibre of the gun mounted on her fore-castle. In a spirit of ill-timed levity Battalion Headquarters applied to Brigade for a patrol punt in which to embark a boarding party; but Brigade

considered that ducks were more plentiful than Boche launches on the floods, and turned down the application.

Raid on "B" Company. Unfortunately many of the new reinforcements were not yet broken in to the necessity of avoiding all movement by daylight, and in this manner the Church Yard Post, guarding the road into Lens, was given away. At any rate, on the night of the 31st Oct./1st Nov., this post, comprising a N.C.O. and five men, was successfully raided by the Boche. An hour or so after evening "Stand down," the sentry heard a whistle close in front, and shouted to the post to "Stand to." As they did so, a salvo of "Pine apples" fell in and around the post, followed by volleys of "Potato-mashers." There were several direct hits on the post, and the sentry fell with a broken leg. Hearing the other men open fire, he crawled away to get help from the support trench 100 yards down the street.

What happened after this it is difficult to say, as the sentry was the only survivor. The next post heard rifle fire and saw figures advancing. They opened fire with their Lewis gun, and afterwards brought in a dead Boche Officer from in front of their position. When supports moved forward, they had great difficulty in discovering the raided post, as it had been completely blown in. At last it was found, with four bodies in it terribly mutilated by the bombs; the only cause for satisfaction was that the magazines of the men's rifles had in all cases been nearly emptied. The N.C.O., Corporal Young, was missing, and it was believed at the time that he had been taken prisoner, though actually he was never heard of again. As soon as possible a large fighting patrol was sent out, but met with no success owing to the absence of the Boche. They collected, however, several bags of bombs which had been dropped by the raiding party.

After this incident, many plans were formed for retaliation, but the 2/8th were not allowed to do anything on their own, as the time for preparation was considered too short. In point of fact, a raid was attempted

by the 2/5th some ten days later, but
Retaliation. failed owing to the Bangalore Torpedo being mislaid whilst crossing No Man's Land. Retaliation of another sort was not wanting, and the enemy positions on this front came in for special attention from our Artillery. A battery of 6 inch Stokes came into action from behind Eleu trenches, and a swarm of gas projectiles from the same neighbourhood must have made things very unpleasant on the other side of the line.

Senior Officers, during this relief, were able to gratify a predeliction for christening trenches, etc., most of which, hitherto, had been distinguished by Map references only. The Battalion pioneers were kept busy painting nice new signboards; and it was a matter for speculation with all ranks as to what the Canadians would say when they returned and found a front line trench labelled "Dithie Tarling."

Communication with the battalion on our right, the 7th, was fairly easy, as some sort of trench connected the two sectors. On the left, however, where a battalion of another division continued the line, the canal formed a natural barrier. Communication by wire was through the Divisional Headquarters concerned only, and anything else was out of the question. It is true that on moonlight nights "C" Company saw figures on the other bank waving some sort of flags, but it remained a moot point as to whether these were British or Germans.

Owing to the recent advance in this part of the line there were many derelict enemy wires lying all over the country side. After a time it was decided by some brass-hat that the enemy were probably "listening in" by these means and intercepting our messages. As a result practically all messages sent by wire had to be in code, and general directions were given to Officers to cut all German wires they saw. For some days there was great rejoicing, but disaster soon followed. A certain Officer going round the line at night, was nearly decapitated by a wire laid across the top of his trench. Knowing it

could be no battalion wire, he drew his cutters and hastily severed it. Next day came a message from Division saying that the Nth. Listening Company R. E. had had their wires cut and did we know anything about it, please?

Some very curious rumours went the rounds in the Brigade. The first was that a wealthy philatelist of Lens had left his collection, worth many thousand francs, in one of the cellars in Avion. The result of this was much unofficial searching by all battalions, without any result however. The second rumour was

Rumours. supported by a certain amount of fact. One afternoon an agitated Frenchman made his appearance at Brigade Headquarters and asked for permission to remove his belongings from his house in Avion. It was refused, as on inquiry his house was found to be in or near the front line. From this sprang the following story. When forced to leave Lens by the German advance, this man was said to have concealed a portion of his wealth—French banknotes—in the hollow sign over a butcher's shop. The sign was a metal bull's head, and the Corps Commander was quoted, quite wrongly, as being willing to give £10 for it.

Well, one night the bull's head was found, but so firmly rivetted into the wall of the shop, that all efforts failed to detach it. At last one individual climbed up and shot away its supports, and it was borne in triumph to a dug-out for investigation. Alas for the investigators, it was quite solid; and not even the most hardened suggested sending it to the Corps Commander.

Out of the Line. No further incidents took place. On the night of the 5th/6th November the battalion was relieved by a Staffordshire unit. After an unusually troublesome relief, we were taken down by the light railway from La Coulotte, through Ablain St. Nazaire, to the Chateau de la Haie. Detraining there, we marched a short distance to Gouy Servins, arriving about dawn. A hot meal was ready waiting, and quite good billets in the Chateau and Nissen huts.

Early that morning, after only a few hours sleep, Officers were again disturbed by a message ordering immediate reconnaissance of the Lievin sector, which had just been taken over by the Lincoln and Leicester Brigade. This was done forthwith by representatives of each company and Battalion Headquarters, involving a long and exhausting day's work. For a few days the battalion was occupied with refitting and tactical exercises, expecting, at the end of their rest, to go into the line at Lievin.

Honours. On the 13th inst., a Brigade Ceremonial

Parade was held at the Chateau de la Haie, and the decorations won at Ypres were awarded. Captain C. P. Elliott and Lieutenant G. G. Elliot received the Military Cross, but other recipients of decorations were unfortunately not available. One night the "Crumps" Divisional Concert Party visited the battalion, and were much appreciated, as no opportunity of seeing them had occurred for a long time past.

Move to Etrun. After a few days rest one heard that the Division was likely to move to another part

of the line before long, and shortly it was definitely known that the Sherwood Forester Brigade would not relieve the Lincolns and Leicesters at Lievin. On the 14th November, the Brigade moved by march route to Etrun, the Battalion being quartered in "Y" Huts, one of the worst camps it had ever been their misfortune to visit.

CHAPTER XVII.

CAMBRAI AND AFTER.

BY

CAPTAIN J. S. C. OATES, D.S.O., M.C.

The march on the 14th November was uneventful, except for one incident. Hardly was the column in motion when a G.S. waggon, driven by an Australian, with a Canadian brakesman, attempted to pass the battalion at full gallop. The road was narrow, and, if the driver's language was good, his driving was not. It was the merest luck that a nasty accident did not take place.

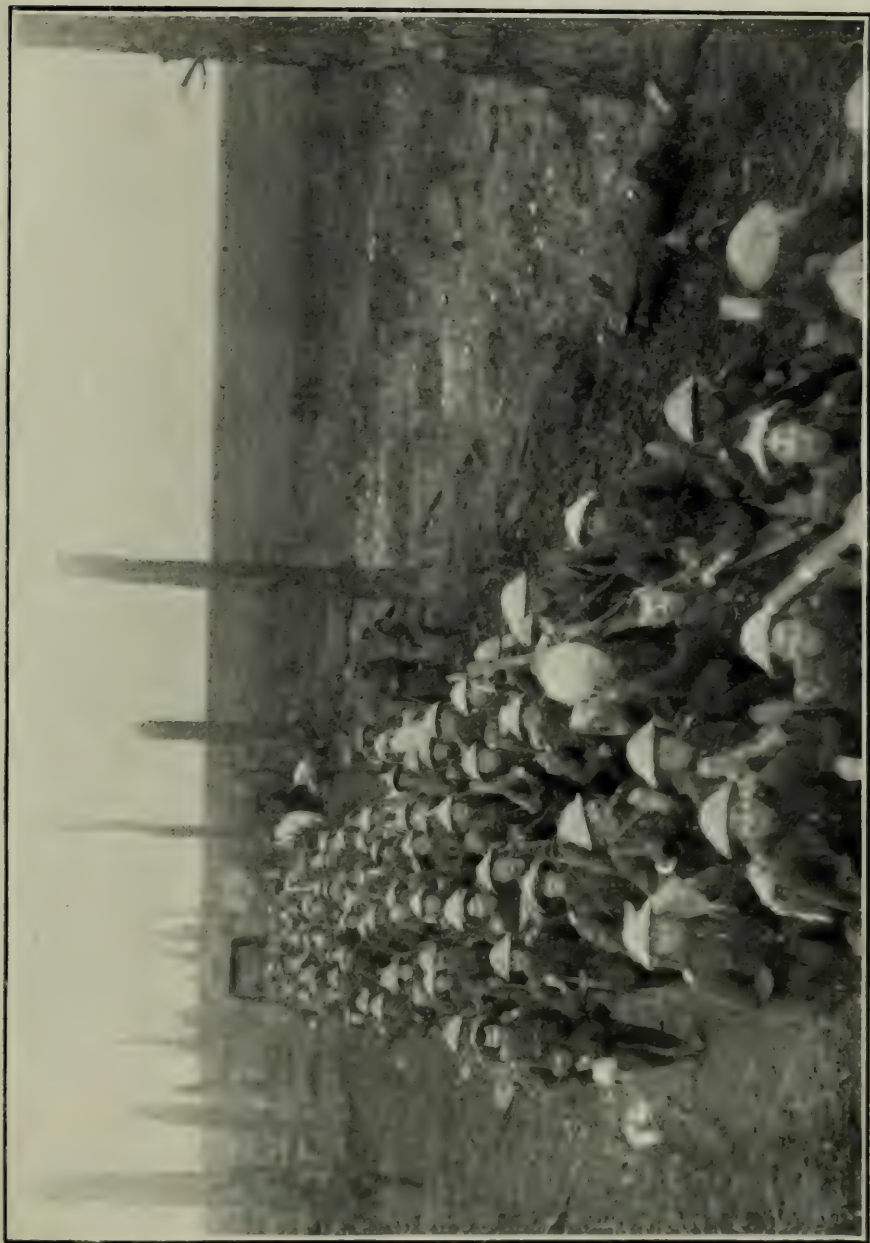
Etrun. Our destination, Etrun, was a small village a few miles West of Arras. The previously mentioned Nissen Huts, called "Y" Camp, which were allotted to the battalion, had been stripped of all comforts and most necessities by the last occupants; but the remaining hours of daylight were well used, and the men were able to settle down fairly comfortably for the night. Four days were spent here, and can be described only as a period of waiting. The neighbourhood was crowded with Scotch troops of the 51st Division. Only one thing could be urged against them, and that was the weird and awful wailing that arose at Retreat and Reveillé; Colonel Duncan, himself a Scotchman, said it was "Wallace's Lament," and all ranks agreed that Wallace must have had great pain.

Preparations for the Offensive. The 51st Division were seen to be practicing open order attacks over great depths of country, and this, together with the fact that they had had an issue of new clothing, seemed to indicate that a "stunt" was near. After a day or two the Scotchmen moved off, and some of the 2/8th Officers happening to walk through an old camp of theirs, found a model of some trenches. These were thoughtfully labelled, and to those who had been near Havrincourt earlier in the year Sherwood Avenue and Derby Road had a familiar sound. We all felt we were getting warm, especially when the C.O. was summoned to a Divisional Conference.

The remaining days in "Y" Camp were occupied with tactical schemes, first for Officers and N.C.O.'s, and then for the whole Battalion. During these a large number of aeroplanes was seen, and appeared to be confining themselves entirely to the practice "contour-chasing"—for the coming offensive, we told ourselves. There was an Aerodrome near the Camp and several Officers of the Brigade managed to get flights. For the rest, leave into Arras was sanctioned, and a certain amount of impromptu football was played.

On the night of the 19th the Battalion moved by march route to Hendecourt, being strictly ordered to show no lights on the way. They were accommodated in a camp lately used by a battalion of Guards, and if possible in a worse condition of dis-repair than the last. On the afternoon of the 20th the C.O. disclosed to the Officers the intentions of the Divisional Commander.

Plan of Attack. A big surprise attack between Moeuvres on the North and Gouzeaucourt on the South was fixed for dawn on the following morning, and would be carried out by the five divisions in the line, among them the 51st Division. A break through on this small frontage was expected, and was to be exploited by the cavalry. If this also was successful, the left wing of the attack was to turn northwards and take a large portion of the German line from the rear



THE 2/8TH *en route* FOR THE FRONT LINE.

A hundred thousand prisoners were expected. The 59th Division was to take part in this final movement, and was to seize the crossings of the Sensée river some ten miles the other side of the present German lines!

The scale of the operation came as a great surprise to many, fresh from the "limited objectives" of the Ypres Salient.—Yet the more it was considered, the more practicable it appeared, and the only doubt expressed was a hope that we should have enough men. All preparations had already been made, as we were under two hours notice to move, and there was nothing to do but wait for the morrow.

21st November. All were up before dawn, and were disappointed to find a wet and misty morning. The wind was wrong, so no gunfire could be heard, and it was not till midday that it was even known that the attack had been made. All the afternoon messages came dribbling in and by evening we had a fair idea of the progress of the attack. It was evident that Flesquières was proving a tough nut to crack, and might hold up further progress altogether.

Move to Gomiecourt. Next day came news both good and bad, and that night a further move nearer the line was made to Gomiecourt, where, in the rain, some few tents were made to provide a rather inadequate shelter for the battalion. Nobody minded much, for it was not till next day that all hope of taking part in a great victory was dispelled. Then it was known that, though a success had been scored, that was all for the present. Rumour laid the blame for failure on the unexpected and prolonged resistance of Flesquières, and on the unpunctuality of certain cavalry units at their rendezvous.

Visit to the Line. On the 23rd the Battalion remained in camp, while the C.O., with the four Company Commanders, went up to have a look at the newly captured ground. They returned very much impressed by two things; first, the complete absence of concealment by the troops in the area, which

carelessness was cunningly fostered by the light artillery fire of the Boche; and second, by the small number of dead that were to be seen. In the latter connection a certain General some months afterwards stated that the Boche only left sixty casualties behind on his divisional front, a fact due to the small number of troops holding the line.

Next day orders were received to entrain at Achiet-le-Grand and that evening the Battalion arrived at Fins, moving thence by a short march to Equancourt. We were billeted here and there in the ruins, which were also occupied by the other units of the Brigade.

That evening, soon after dusk, cavalry began to pass through on the road to Fins, and continued to do so up to ten o'clock. It was hoped that a further advance was to be attempted, but unfortunately this proved not to be the case.

For several days we remained at Equancourt training, and it indeed seemed like home after our stay there earlier in the year. A certain amount of unofficial shooting was done in the woods, at magpies and wood pigeons, but little blood was shed. Eventually on the 26th, "D" Company was detached to Gouzeaucourt for work with the 470 Field Company R.E.; and the day following "A," "B" and "C" were sent to Villers Plouich for a like purpose. The latter companies had been gone only an hour or two when a message was received at Battalion Headquarters to recall all companies at once.

Owing to the crowded state of the only available road, the usual cyclist orderly was supplemented by the 2nd in Command on horseback, and in due course the Companies were collected and started on their return journey. The march back took a long time, as blocks were continually occurring and many halts had to be made. One of these latter was in Gouzeaucourt, the Battalion being fallen out opposite a twelve inch howitzer battery in action by the side of the road. It was a most interesting sight to watch, but rather trying to the nerves of the Officers' chargers and pack horses.

Old British Front Line at Beaucamp. On getting back to former billets in Equancourt, the Battalion was ordered to "stand by" ready to move, and so remained till the afternoon of the 29th, when we were told to proceed to the old British front line before Beaucamp. The march through Gouzeaucourt and Villers Plouich was again most trying, the route being crowded, not only by Infantry marching in both directions but by guns, cavalry, and all conceivable kinds of transport. Just beyond the latter village the Battalion transport, which was following the column, was turned back and ordered to go round another way. The horses were very done after a trying march, but expostulations were useless, the only explanation given being that the road went by a Divisional Headquarters and that no transport was allowed to pass.

Transport Difficulties. The new road was proved by the map to be three or four miles longer, but far worse was to come. A steep hill was met, and the road, which here ran between 20 foot banks, was knee deep in mud. It was impossible to pull out and go round, owing to the steep banks and to wire, so the ascent had to be tried.

The first few limbers got through, but then a waggon got stuck and blocked the road for those behind, so that they were bogged also. The next few hours should be well remembered by all who were unlucky enough to be there. It was by then dark, and no lights could be shown. Horses were brought back and some of the vehicles pulled out, but most refused to budge even with six horses!

Eventually Sergeant Merrin, the transport Sergeant, encountered a troop of cavalry, who good naturedly offered to help, and by these means and some hastily improvised harness, the last limber was freed. After further wanderings the transport reached a point where guides from the Battalion should have awaited them, only to meet with further disappointment. After lengthy reconnaissance the Battalion was found, and in some marvellous way the transport arrived, G.S. waggons and

all, after negotiating a bank, several belts of wire, and innumerable trenches.

Bivouacs in Happy Valley. The Battalion, as before stated, was near the old British front line before Beaucamp, and bivouaced the night in what came to be known as "Happy Valley," only a few hundred yards from Boar Copse. In the morning, about "stand to," we were disturbed by some shelling, fortunately ineffective. As the light improved, the surrounding country was seen to be black with camps and horse lines of all sorts, no effort at concealment having been made. Numbers of tanks passed close to us on their way back to refill, coming from the direction of Flesquières; it was the first time that many of us had seen them, except ditched and derelict in the mud at Ypres.

Not far from the bivouacs a British observation balloon was up, the only one for many miles, and the Boche evidently decided to bring it down. Any way, a hostile 'plane suddenly dived out of a cloud at it, circled round once, firing all the time, and then disappeared as suddenly as it had come. A few of the bullets came unpleasantly close, and, while we still watched, a stream of smoke rose from the balloon, the two observers jumped for it, and floated slowly down. In a few seconds the gas bag was a mass of flames falling swiftly earthward, narrowly missing the parachutes, which rocked in the air disturbed by its passage. It was not till some hours later that we understood the full significance of this incident.

German Counter Attack Nov. 30th. About midday a party of Officers were to start on a reconnaissance of the line S.E. of Bournon Wood, where it was believed the Battalion would take over shortly; but a message came from Brigade cancelling this, and ordering the Battalion to "stand by." There was no further news for some time, till a mounted orderly passed, enquiring the way to Divisional Headquarters. He stated that the Germans had counter-attacked and had taken Gouzeaucourt. Hard on this

rumour a Motor Ambulance Convoy came by, crawling painfully across country. They stated also that the Boche counter-attack was successful, and that the British troops in the salient were surrounded except for a bottleneck 2000 yards wide at Metz-en-Couture. This gap they were making for in an effort to escape.

The news was sufficiently grave; and in the absence of further orders the Battalion occupied some old trenches in the form of a rough square on the high ground N.W. of Boar Copse. These trenches were hurriedly put in a state of repair, and the Battalion remained "standing to." Just then a supply tank waddled up, and disgorged eight Lewis guns and ammunition, a most welcome reinforcement. An outpost line had been pushed some 500 yards to the South, and patrols further still; both these now reported troops appearing on the skyline from the direction of Villers Plouich; on closer investigation these proved to be stragglers, who vaguely confirmed the success of the Boche. Towards dusk, a vivid red spot of colour was observed approaching the outposts; and there was much speculation as to what it could be; on arrival it resolved itself into the Town Major of Beaucamp and his servant, the latter labouring under an enormous red quilt. As the Town Major observed, it was safer to sleep in the open for that night.

After dark, communication with Brigade Headquarters was resumed, and orders came for the Battalion to move into Unseen Support, south of Ribécourt, but later this destination was changed to

Mole Trench. Mole Trench, the third or easternmost trench of the Hindenburg system in that sector. The march to this position was short and uneventful, though complicated by meeting the transport of the Guards Division on the road. Here, at last, our Transport left us, under orders to return to Equancourt, so we inferred that we were not completely surrounded.

Mole Trench was not completed, and the few dug-outs were mostly occupied by the Headquarters of Units in the line. However, the men settled down well, and during the three days of their stay here, were not uncomfortable. By daylight it was seen that the ground

between Mole Trench and Ribécourt was mainly occupied by horse lines, in spite of being already infested by our batteries and continually shelled by the enemy. In fact, at all hours of the day and night wounded horses were wandering about, and in default of their lawful owners it devolved on the Battalion to put them out of their pain.

A large number of derelict Tanks lay all over the countryside, and were being constantly shelled, but a good proportion were salved by the Tank Corps. One tank, named Euryalus, remained ditched in Unseen Support, and gave the opportunity of a near and detailed view. On the 3rd December, a Battalion of the Buffs came into Unseen Support and from them was obtained the first accurate account of the operations on the 30th November. It appeared to be a fact that the enemy at one time had taken the whole of Gouzeaucourt, Gonnelieu and La Vacquerie and swept with machine-gun fire the country as far as Havrincourt Wood. This movement was checked by a Field Company R.E. of the 59th Division, assisted after some time by eleven Tanks—ten of which were knocked out—some dismounted cavalry and a few companies of a Guards Battalion. Counter attacks by us had subsequently pushed the enemy about a mile out of Gouzeaucourt, and had practically cleared Villers Plouich.

On the evening of the 3rd inst., the 6th Battalion rejoined the brigade, having been detached to another division at Villers Plouich, and having carried out a successful counter attack. Soon after their arrival, the 8th received orders for a further move, so we accordingly turned over our Headquarters to Colonel Clarke and his Officers. This new move was entirely unexpected and was made a difficult one by the fact that orders were only received after dark. It was a fine moonlight night, and the C.O. went on ahead to the Headquarters of the 18th Infantry Brigade, to whom we were to be attached, to get information about the new line. This latter was a portion of the Hindenburg Support about 1000 yards S.W. of Marcoing.

**In the
Line near
Marcoing.**

The march up, by way of Ribécourt, was uneventful except for the attentions of a Boche 'plane, which flew so low that it was visible in the moonlight.

The new trenches were a double line on a wide frontage, and some difficulty was experienced in getting the companies properly spaced out. For the rest, their siting was good, giving a wide field of observation from a considerable height, and ample shelter for the men was provided. The next day, the 4th December, was employed in putting the position in a state of defence, as it had become the front line at dawn owing to the withdrawal from Marcoing. Twice during the morning the enemy were observed massing in Marcoing Copse, but were dispersed by our Artillery. During the day a British Machine Gun and crew came into our lines from Marcoing, who stated that they were the only survivors of a Machine Gun Company which had engaged Boche Infantry at a range of 15 yards the previous night.

Relief by About evening "Stand to" an advance
2nd Sherwood party of the 2nd Sherwood Foresters
Foresters. arrived, who said that their Battalion
 would take over the line that night.

Confirmation of this was given by 'phone, with orders for the 2/8th to rejoin the 178th Brigade in the old British front line at Trescault as soon as relieved.

We were very pleased to meet our regular Battalion, but several of the men were heard to complain at having to leave a position they had prepared without having a smack at the Boche.

The 2nd Battalion had been in the line for some days at Nine Wood, North of Marcoing, but, though they had taken part in some heavy fighting, they were fortunate in having suffered comparatively few casualties.

The relief took place very late, or rather early, the Battalion not getting away till just before dawn on the 5th. A small advance party had been sent on to Trescault and had rather an exciting time. Some members of it were sniped at by a nervous machine gunner near Ribécourt, and on arrival at Trescault, it was to find the

At village undergoing a strafe, and our proposed billets bathed in poison gas. These
Trescault. billets were nothing more nor less than the old British front line, without shelter of any sort. One member of the advance party, anxious to find some accommodation for the C.O., searched diligently and at last found a very small dug-out, with the feet of the occupant sticking through the door. With the remark, "Ay-op, come out o' that!" he gave a vigorous pull, and drew out into daylight the justly incensed C.O. of another Battalion; tableau!

At this juncture the battalion arrived, but, owing to a misunderstanding, the cooks did not turn up to give the men a hot meal. After some time this was remedied, a few tents were wrung from the Town Major, and the men got settled into the old trenches in some degree of comfort. From the 5th to the 9th instant, we remained here, nominally in rest, but actually rather far from it. The men had now been since the 18th Nov. without the chance of more than a casual wash, and an effort was made to rig up sail baths for them, with some success.

To add to our other troubles, a long range gun bestowed much attention on our area, so much so that those of us who were sleeping in tents began to dig themselves in! Another incident produced a bad impression. One day three Boche aeroplanes came sailing over, untroubled by any of our airmen and pursued only by the erratic bursts of a solitary Archie. Quite

Bombing. close to us, across the valley, a big number of horses were watering, and by these the Boche observers were attracted as well as by the Lewis gun fire from our trenches. They dropped their bombs, securing a direct hit on the horses, but only bracketing the trenches. Our transport lines, some thousand yards North, on the edge of Havrincourt Wood, were constantly receiving similar attention and several casualties were incurred. Among these were Lieutenant and Quartermaster Schumach, wounded, and Corporal Vickers, the master tailor, killed, both of whom could

be illspared. Lieutenant Charlesworth took over the duties of Quartermaster, and was a most efficient deputy.

This Officer, together with Lieut. C. Thomas, had just rejoined the battalion.

While we were still at Trescault, orders were issued for the reconnaissance of positions to the North of, and covering, Havrincourt. This was done in anticipation of a counter-attack from the direction of Moeuvres, which fortunately never materialised.

In the last few days the Staffordshire Brigade had been involved in the fighting at Bourlon Wood, and had suffered many casualties. So shaken by constant gassing were the remainder that they had to be sent *en masse* to the seaside to recuperate! In consequence, increased work was thrown on to the other two Brigades of the Division, and there was no prospect of rest for some time to come.

The withdrawal from Bourlon Wood in which the 7th Battalion participated, had by now taken place, and the 8th were ordered to take over a sector of the adjusted line from a Leicester battalion on the night of the 9th/10th December.

In the The relief was effected without disturb-
Line at ance, though the M.O., mistaking his
Flesquières. way, tried to walk into the German lines,
 a proceeding stopped only by the gallant
 officer getting stuck in the mud. Without going into
 details, it is sufficient to state that the frontage taken
 over covered Flesquières from the North, on a width of
 1000 yards. Two Companies held the front line, a hastily
 dug trench running West from the Beetroot Factory;
 and two were in support in old German trenches on the
 Northern outskirts of the village.

During this tour of four days very heavy shelling was met with, but fortunately it was directed chiefly into the village, where were situated various Battalion Headquarters who could well look after themselves. On

Aerial activity. the evening of the 10th an enemy 'plane was brought down just behind the 2/8th Headquarters, and though probably every Archie for miles, and every Machine Gun for several thousand yards had fired at it, we claimed it as ours. Boche airmen came over our lines in great numbers and flying very low, at all hours of the day; but we did not see many of our own 'planes. One Boche, in particular, flew down the whole length of a reserve trench at so low a height, that the observer could be seen to have a moustache, and a Company Officer even fired at him with a revolver. One is almost glad to relate that he was not brought down.

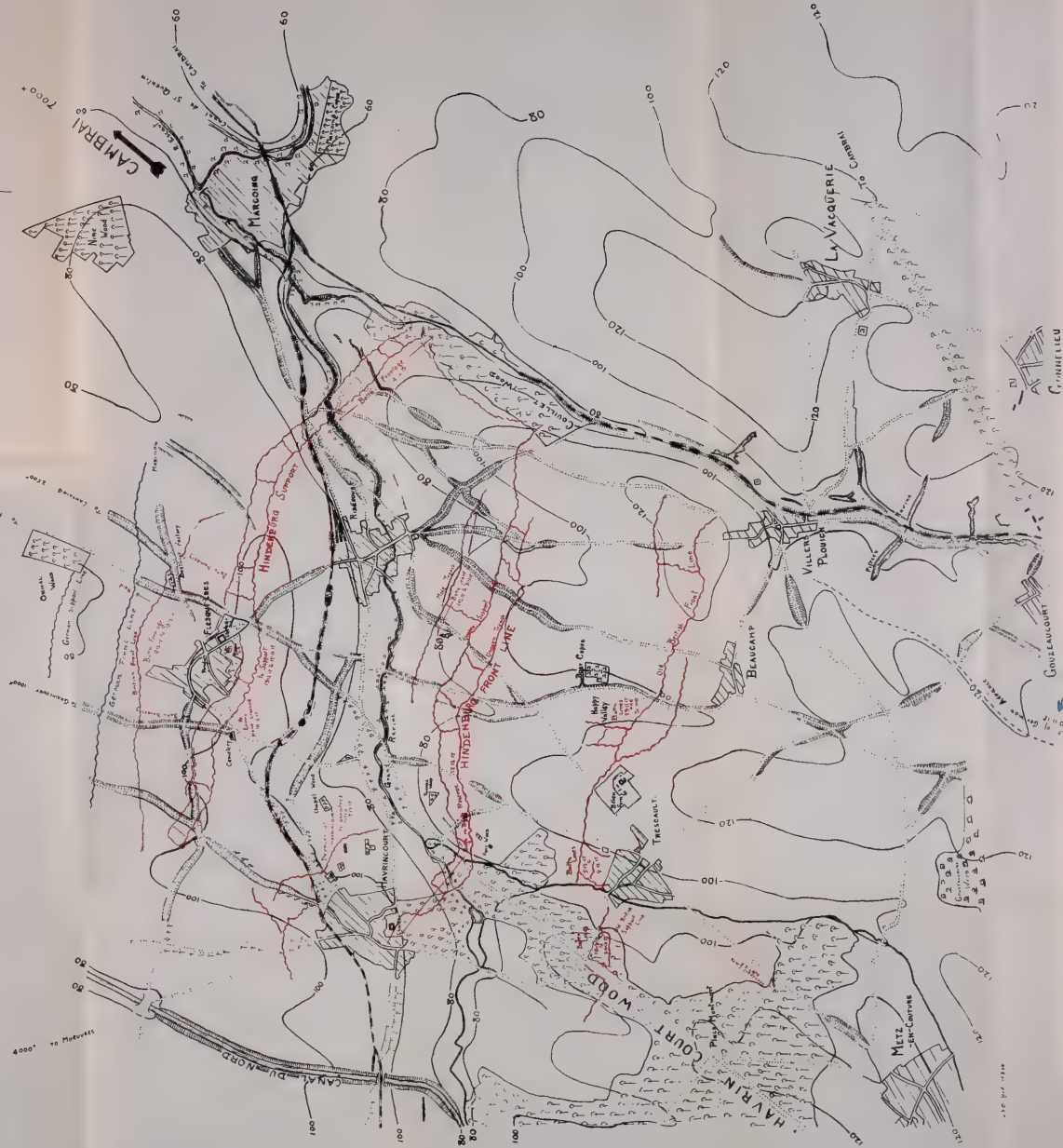
Tanks. Flesquières itself, as the centre of enemy resistance three weeks earlier, was very interesting. On the ridge running S.E. from the village lay a group of four or five derelict tanks, all knocked out by direct hits. It is said that a German Battery Commander seeing the tanks trying to enter the village from this side, had brought his guns into action against them at a range of only a few hundred yards, and under the effective fire of several British battalions. Undoubtedly to this Officer, as well as to the Town Major of Flesquières and the unexpected presence of a resting division in Cambrai, do we owe the only partial success of the attack of the 21st Nov.

Patrols. Much work was done on the trenches during our stay, and they badly needed it. Patrols were sent out nightly from each Company, and, following routes worked out beforehand, secured an amount of much needed information. Brigade Headquarters were anxious for a raid to be made, but, owing to the caution of the Boche in getting into touch with our new line, it was difficult to predict whether any particular trench of his would be occupied at a given time. However, an attempt was made by Lieutenant Thomas with about 50 men. Artillery support was dispensed with, and the raiding party successfully reached their objective only to find the birds flown.

CAMBRAI OPERATIONS

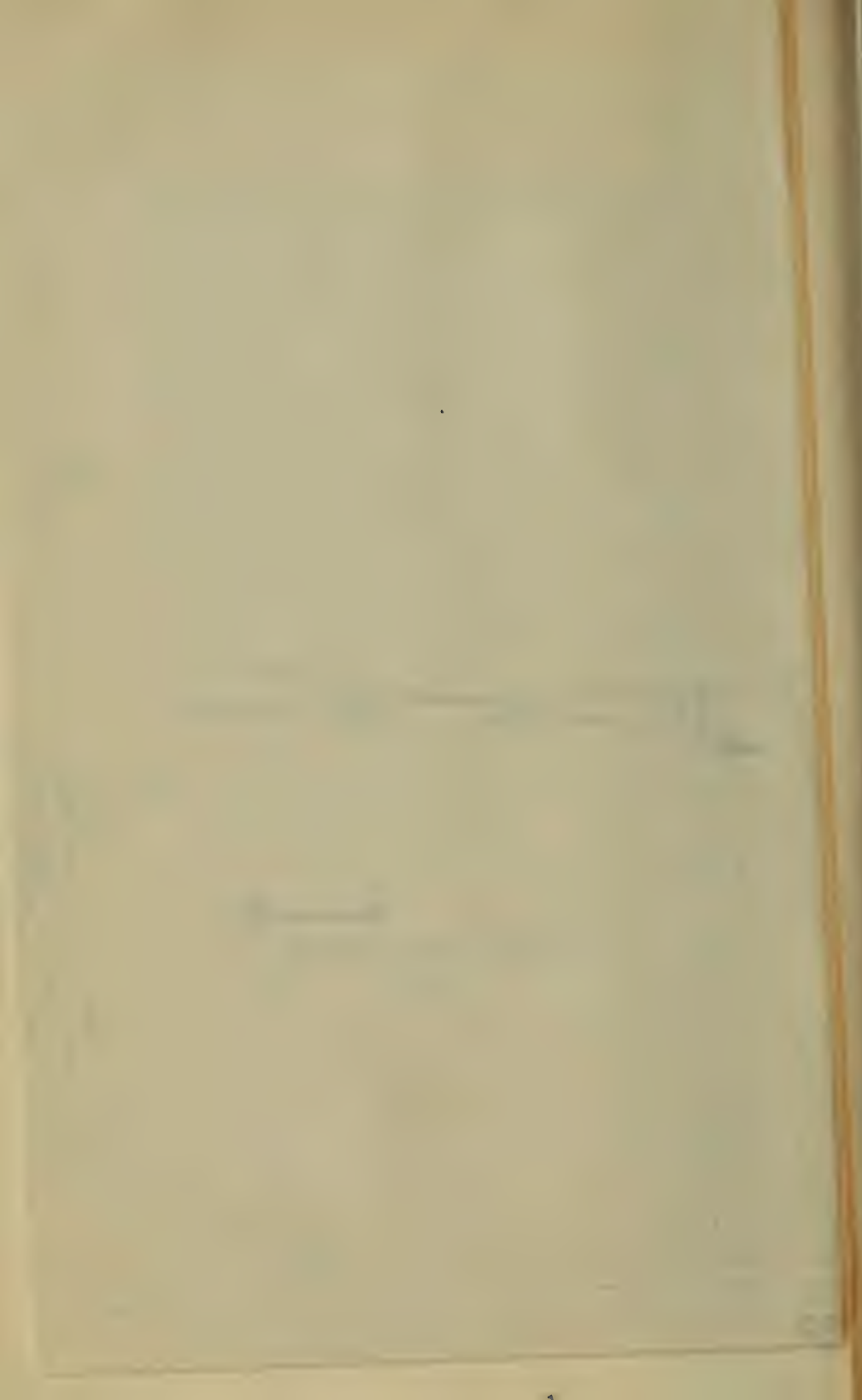
29-11-17 to 20-12-17

BOURLON WOOD
3000'



METRES
0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000
YARDS
0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000

Direction of German Advance, 18-19



In Hindenburg Support Line. On the night of the 13th/14th the Battalion was relieved by the 2/5th South Staffords, and moved back a few hundred yards into the Hindenburg Support Line, south of Flesquières. Here we were kept hard at it with working parties day and night, and also came in for a certain amount of shelling, particularly after dark. Hostile aircraft continued active, and our Lewis gunners had plenty of work. It was noticeable that the 'planes kept at a more respectful height.

While we were in the neighbourhood of Flesquières a party of men came to visit us from a near by Division, and our delight was great to find it consisted of men of the big draft we had sent to France from the Curragh late in 1916. They had kept together and many of them were still left; and they wished much that they might have served with their old battalion in France.

In Brigade Reserve. No further incident occurred during this tour of the trenches, and on the 17th orders were received to proceed, after being relieved that night, to take over a sector of the Hindenburg Front Line, held by the 7th (Robin Hood) Battalion. This new frontage (a reserve position) was only approximately known, and matters were further complicated by the 7th sidestepping further North just before dusk. This new line, extending 2000 yards South from Havrincourt village, was successfully taken over. It was bitter cold, and must have registered 15 or 20 degrees of frost, so rations were eagerly expected, especially the rum. Owing to these last minute changes, and supplementary messages going astray, rations went to the wrong place. A search was started and kept up all night, till at last, just before morning, they and their escort were found in a deserted trench where they were sheltering after having failed to get on the track of the Battalion.

Move to Barastre. Next day the Battalion moved into the old British front line North of Trescault. Here we remained until evening of the 20th, when we were relieved by the 10th Sherwood Foresters,

and were ordered to proceed into camp at Barastre. All ranks were overjoyed at the near prospect of a rest and a wash. The march back was a long and rather trying one, as all roads were still much congested. Part of the way lay through Havrincourt Wood, which we viewed for the last time. At this point the 178th Brigade Staff passed the Battalion in a motor car, and excited much envy!

Our stay at Barastre lasted three days, and was extremely pleasant. Captain Branston was Town Major of the village, and did all he could for us in addition to allotting to us a most excellent camp. Unfortunately his steam baths broke down but efficient substitutes were contrived by the battalion pioneers under Sergeant Foulds. There was abundance of game in the surrounding country, a fact much appreciated by Captain Wright.

Move to

Beaulencourt.

On the 23rd there was a further move, to join the rest of the Brigade at Beaulencourt, a few kilometres out of Bapaume, and we were quartered in Nissen Huts alongside the 7th. The main point of interest was now, of course, Christmas and Christmas dinner. Owing to rumours of a further move, and to the failure of the Canteen to deliver goods, it was decided to postpone the dinners till after Christmas. The night time at Beaulencourt was much disturbed by bombing 'planes, and once searchlights caught a Hun machine close to the camp. The Brigade Anti-Aircraft Lewis Guns had a good target and the 'plane was brought down, by whom it is not known. This particular night was an unlucky one for the enemy, as no less than five of their bombers were crashed in the Bapaume district.

On the 24th inst., orders were received for a move the following morning, Christmas day. The Battalion moved off at 6.30 a.m. and entrained at Bapaume about

Christmas

Day, 1917.

10 o'clock, having a fairly comfortable journey. The transport, however, was not to fare so well, part having to proceed by road, a matter of 30 miles, to the St. Pol area, and part moving by special transport

train. Insufficient trucks and bad ramps were to be expected, but a collision, which sent one of the cooks through the floor of its truck, was regarded as an extra.

To add to all these troubles, a blizzard began to blow, and when the train reached its destination, Petit Houvin, after dark the snow was several inches deep.

There was no ramp for unloading, and one had to be improvised from sleepers, etc. During operations, the Brigade Major, who was assisting, smashed his thumb; and it was two hours before the last axle was clear of the train. Then followed a trek of some four miles, and the battalion was finally located at Monts-en-Ternois about midnight. The remaining transport arrived at the same time, and was got under some sort of shelter for the night.

Monts-en-Ternois. The village was quite comfortable, the men being accommodated in barns and lofts.

Within a few days the much delayed Christmas festivities were held and were quite successful. After which, training recommenced, of an elementary kind, interlaced with frequent tactical schemes; the afternoons were devoted to recreational training.

Honours. Here reference is due to the award of the D.S.O. to the late Commanding Officer, Lieut.-Colonel W. Coape Oates, which was gazetted on January 1st, 1918. A congratulatory telegram was sent from the battalion, and an answer was received saying how much these good wishes were valued by Colonel Oates.

Supplementary to this was the "Mention" list, appearing on November 7th of the previous year, and containing the following names of Officers and N.C.O.'s of the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters:—

Lieutenant (A/Capt.) C. P. Elliott.
Major (A/Lt.-Col.) M. C. Martyn, M.C.
Lieut.-Colonel W. Coape Oates.
Captain T. H. C. Woolley (deceased).
306074 C. S. M. Farrow, F.
306135 Sergt. Foulds, E.

" The Area Belle." The long evenings hung a bit heavy on most of us, and as there must be an end of even the most protracted series of lectures, many sing-songs and company concerts were organised. The battalion was lucky in having a theatre ready made, namely the barn occupied by "A" Company as a billet; at a pinch the whole battalion could be seated—perhaps "crammed" is the better word—though the pit was often crowded out into the open air. The M.O., Captain Elliot, hit on the idea of producing a play, and got together a most talented company. Properties were either improvised or obtained from England at great cost, and on the night a Grand Concert was staged, followed by the performance of the " The Area Belle." It was rapturously acclaimed, and the artists were called repeatedly before the curtain and the audience was with difficulty persuaded to let them go.

The surrounding country was well stocked with game, and the lady of the manor was tactfully approached, but with negative results. Relations, indeed, became rather strained when the incorrigible Sergt. Walker and his satellites went out shooting with a service rifle and actually bagged a brace of partridges. The matter was amicably adjusted in the end, and the battalion was both pleased and surprised by the gift of a good football ground; and the Officers' mess by some excellent poultry.

Divisional Football Ties. The snow remained for some time, but after the thaw the ties for the Divisional Football Cup were started. In two hard-fought games our team reached the third round, and there met our neighbours, the Robin Hoods. In one of the best and fastest matches that the spectators have ever seen, the 8th were just beaten by one goal, the score being 3—2, I believe.

Disinterested watchers from other battalions said that if the ground had been hard, we should have won, as ours was the faster team. Some idea of the excitement caused may be gauged by the very unclerical language to which a certain padre was heard to give way.

Brigade Bayonet Fighting and Fire Control Competitions. On the 23rd January, a Brigade Bayonet Fighting and Physical Training Competition was held and the 8th secured both first and second places, "D" Company scoring 175 points and "A" Company 172. In the individual competition 97040 Lce.-Cpl. Wilson won the first prize with 46 points, so that on the day's work it was a case of the 2/8th first, and the rest nowhere. On the 28th inst., in the Brigade Fire Control Competition, the battalion team secured second place.

Disbandment. These fine performances had been spurred by a rumour that the battalion was shortly to be disbanded, and by a natural wish to leave the Brigade something by which to remember the 2/8th. Actually it was on the 27th that official notification to this effect was received, and all ranks were utterly despondent.

The only saving clause was an order from the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Douglas Haig, stating that the disbandment in no way cast reflection on the efficiency and fighting powers of the unit, but was due entirely to the serious man-power situation and the impossibility of finding further reinforcements.

On the 29th January, 1918, the final split took place, drafts being sent to the following units:—

1st Battalion The Sherwood Foresters.

1/8th	„	„	„
2/5th	„	„	„
2/6th	„	„	„
12th	„	„	„

The spirit which had always inspired the 2/8th battalion went with the men to their new units, and by all accounts old 2/8th men played a gallant part in the disaster of March 21st, when, out of a full Brigade, less than a hundred men came out of the line at the end of the day.

Sergeant Johnson's V.C. Mention must also be made of Sergeant William Johnson, who, after the disbandment, won the V.C. while serving with another unit. He, during an attack, captured two Machine Guns, and though severely wounded by a bomb, continued gallantly to lead his men. On a second occasion, he advanced with wonderful courage, bombed a gun team, and put guns out of action, capturing the teams.

This Chapter cannot be more fittingly ended than by giving, word for word, the report of the Adjutant General, Lieut.-General Macdonough:—

“ I forward the following brief statement of the services rendered to the country during hostilities by the 2/8th (T.F.) Battalion the Sherwood Foresters (Notts. and Derby Regiment).

“ The Battalion was formed on September 11th, 1914, and, after training in England for some time, was sent to Ireland in April, 1916, when it took part in the suppression of the Irish Rebellion, doing very good service at Dublin.

“ In February, 1917, it left Fovant for France, landed at Boulogne February 27th, and was sent to the Southern zone occupied by the British.

“ On March 31st, it assisted in the capture of Vendelles, followed this up by capturing a strong point near by next day, and made an attack on Le Verguier, (April 7th), in which though checked by uncut wire, it established itself close up to the enemy's position, and only withdrew at night owing to the retirement of the units on the flanks. Later in the month it again attacked near Cologne Farm with success, taking and consolidating the quarries.

“ For these operations it received a D.S.O., three D.C.M.'s, a bar, and three M.M.'s.

“ In May it was in line near Cologne Farm, having much fighting. In June it held the Havrincourt and Gouzeaucourt sectors, being in the last named again in July, but moving into reserve on July 8th for

training. It remained out of the line all August, moved to Flanders in September, and took part in the successful general attack of September 26th, east of St. Julien, capturing and holding all its objectives, despite a strong counter-attack, and over 500 casualties.

“ In October the Battalion was transferred to the Lens sector, but was moved again on November 23rd to Equancourt and assisted in the readjustment of the front consequent on the withdrawal from Bourlon Wood (December 1st—6th). Later in December the Battalion moved to Monts-en-Ternois, and, after training there for some weeks, was broken up on January 28th, 1918, sending drafts to the 1st (regular), 2/5th, 2/6th (T.F.) and 12th (Service) Battalions, the remainder proceeding to join their own first line units.

“ In every engagement in which this Battalion took part it upheld the brilliant and glorious traditions of the Notts. and Derby Regiment, to which it belonged.”

APPRECIATION OF THE SERVICES OF THE 2/8TH BATTALION SHERWOOD FORESTERS

BY

BRIGADIER GENERAL T. W. STANSFELD,
C.M.G., D.S.O.

Colonel Oates has asked me to write an Appreciation of the services of the 2/8th Battalion Sherwood Foresters during the time they formed part of the 178th (Sherwood Forester) Brigade which I had the honour to command from April 6th, 1917, until the Brigade was finally disbanded in May, 1918. It affords me the greatest pleasure to do so, and I only wish I had the pen of a ready writer and could express my feelings about Colonel Oates, his Officers, Warrant, Non-commissioned Officers and men in a better and more expressive way.

On April 5th, 1917, I had been appointed to command a Brigade in another Division in another Army, and I had gone to 4th Army Headquarters to say *au revoir* to General Sir Henry Rawlinson and his Staff before taking up my new appointment.

I was just on the point of leaving their Headquarters when Major General A. Montgomery said the Army Commander would like to see me. I went into his room, and he told me he had a vacancy in his army for a Brigadier, would I like to take it or go to the Brigade to which I had originally been posted? I naturally wished to remain with the Army I knew so well—I had been Commandant of the 4th Army Infantry School for one year—and said, "Yes." Accordingly a telephone message was sent to General Headquarters and in ten

minutes the original posting was cancelled and I received orders to proceed next day to Bernes to take over the Sherwood Forester Brigade. I think the 6th April of that year was the proudest day of my life, although I went to the Brigade in fear and trembling never having been—as Captain Oates expresses it—a “brass hat” before, and not knowing what manner of men my future C.O.’s were. However, after two days all my fears vanished and I knew I had to deal with Officers who were excellent soldiers and above all human.

If I remember rightly, the 6th April was Good Friday, and when I reported at Divisional Headquarters I found the Corps Commander there, and both he and General Sandbach told me of the impending attack the following morning to be carried out by the 2/8th supported by 2/6th, and that if I preferred I need not take over the Brigade until after the attack was over.

Not knowing a single man in the Brigade and never having seen the ground over which they were to attack I said I would prefer to take over after the attack. On arrival at Bernes I joined Colonel Oates and we lunched in a cellar. After lunch there was a hurried conference with Staff Officers from the Corps and Division, and still more hurried orders were issued for the attack, and the attack itself took place as described in Chapter X. After the conference I walked up to the line with Hancock, the Intelligence Officer, and he pointed out to me the objective of the Battalion. I studied it closely with my glasses and noticed the wire was not cut. I met some gunner Officers laying a wire and asked them if they were going to cut it. They replied yes, and that if it was not properly cut in daylight the barrage during the attack would complete it!

I always regret I did not go straight back to Brigade Headquarters and telephone the results of my reconnaissance. However, if I had done so it would have been too late I think to have cancelled the attack, as another Division was taking part in it, and further, I was not absolutely sure that I had been examining the exact objective.

I never felt more sorry for any man than I did for Colonel Oates on the morning after the attack. He came to my hovel about 5 or 6 a.m. and told me the attack had failed and worse still his son was missing. Happily the latter statement proved to be incorrect, and Captain Oates lived to do many gallant acts during the "duration," incidentally gaining a well deserved D.S.O.

That afternoon I went to the Battalion Headquarters and made the acquaintance of most of the Officers who, although very tired and disappointed at their failure, still had their tails right up, and only asked to be allowed to prove that they and their men could carry out an attack successfully. This they soon had an opportunity of doing in the attack on the Quarries on 27th April, and although very weak they did exactly what they were ordered to do. I attribute this success in a very great measure to the practice attacks over the "flagged course" described by Colonel Oates. In my opinion no attack—anyhow a trench to trench attack—should be carried out without this previous practice if only one has time to do so. Every man then knows exactly what to do and what is expected of him. These practices over "flagged courses" were originated by Colonel Hubbock of the London Division, and his Battalion was the first to practice in this manner for the attack on Loos in September 1915. After that they became universal wherever possible.

Of course the spirit and morale of the troops carrying it out must be good, and in nine cases out of ten all practised attacks were successful. The spirit and morale of the 2/8th was always good, which remark applies to all Battalions of the Brigade. The difficulty always was to hold the ground when captured. This the 2/8th and 2/6th did at The Quarries in a most commendable way as during the day of the 27th they were pounded by 5.9's and other heavy guns unmercifully. The capture of The Quarries put tremendous heart into both Battalions and they came out of that fight, I am sure, thinking they were second to none in the British Army.

There is one incident in this operation which has been omitted I think and is worthy of mention and that was that Captain Oates, when in the front line trenches a day or so after the attack, spotted a partridge in "No man's land." This he shot with a rifle and recovered after dark. I am not sure he did not do so during daylight. It was in the close season, but I think it shows the spirit in which Battalion Leaders fought, and I am sure his father enjoyed it for dinner!

It was with the greatest regret I heard of Captain Jeffcock's untimely death at the end of May. This Officer had been attached to my Brigade Headquarters, and had proved himself to be a most efficient and capable Officer in every way. The 2/8th were always most unlucky in their Officer casualties right up to the time they were eventually disbanded. If I may digress for a moment I must put in a word for our Divisional and all artillery. All through the War infantry at times were wont to say our artillery were shooting short and no doubt in many cases they did so, but I don't think we all knew what difficulties the artillery had to contend with, such as atmosphere, worn out guns, defective ammunition, and, above all in an attack, never knowing exactly where our infantry were. No one was more sorry to hear of short shooting than the Gunners themselves and often Brigade and Battery Commanders volunteered to send Officers or go themselves into our front line, and even to accompany Battalions in an attack to try to locate guns which might be shooting short.

I always looked upon the Havrincourt area, with the exception of Gouzeaucourt Wood, as one of the quietest parts of the line on the whole front, and we had as far as I remember very few casualties but lots of work. The greatest loss we had there in the Brigade was, as Colonel Oates says, when Colonel St. Hill was killed. He was a splendid man and had a great sense of humour into the bargain. I remember he would persist in calling "Beauchamp," "Beecham." I also remember how he used to pull the leg of another Officer in the Brigade unmercifully.

The gas alarms here were most annoying but they had their amusing incidents! One case was at Brigade Headquarters. The Staff Captain heard the Strombos Horns, put on his gas mask and dashed across to the Quartermaster Sergeant's shelter to wake him up as he knew if he was gassed he (the Staff Captain) would lose his job for inefficiency (the Qr.-Mr.-Sergt. was his chief clerk). He fell into a cellar on the way. It was most amusing for everyone except the Staff Captain. The Q.M.S. was not gassed, and the Staff Captain retained his appointment until he was promoted to General Headquarters!

Our stay at Le Mesnil was a real rest—from shells—but otherwise we had lots of work and plenty of sport. The demonstration platoon of the Battalion was a really good one, and I always regret we could not make more use of it within the Brigade.

Colonel Oates refers to a model of the ground over which we were to attack near Ypres in September, 1917. He on his way to look at this model had one of the narrowest escapes of his life, an 8 inch shell bursting within 15 yards of him as he was riding along the road to visit the model. I drove down this road in the summer of 1919 and the same shell hole was there but covered with grass and weeds.

I think perhaps the attack which the Battalion and indeed the Brigade were most proud of was the attack so vividly described in Chapter XIV. The Brigade took all its objectives and what is more held them, in spite of a most determined organized counter attack. For those who have been in a trench to trench attack I think I need say no more. The Battalion suffered very heavily in both Officers and men and had very bad luck in coming under the heavy gas bombardment after having been relieved in the line.

It was a very sad day when the Battalion heard that Colonel Oates had been invalided home, but everyone hoped to see him back again, but alas, that was not to

be, as when he did come out his Battalion had been disbanded. "

The final big action the Battalion took part in was the Cambrai offensive in November—December, 1917. The time during the counter attack was, to say the least of it, somewhat nerve racking. At one time I had not a single Battalion under my command, all four were lent to different Divisions and for two days I did not even know where the 2/6th was! It was also most difficult to get information and one lived on rumours—mostly unpleasant ones.

After Cambrai we moved to the Houvin area and it was there that it was decided to cut down every Infantry Brigade by one Battalion. It was a great blow to me and the whole Brigade to see such a fine Battalion melt away into nothing in practically one day.

The 2/8th were always to the fore in fighting and every kind of sport. No one felt their loss more than I did, and how I cursed the day they were disbanded when on the 21st March, 1918, a Battalion like them in Reserve would have been a God-send.

Before finishing this inefficient appreciation there are two Officers of the Battalion to whom the Brigade owed a great deal, and I must refer to them. They are Captain Staniforth and Captain Bill Wright. The former was Staff Captain (the identity of the officer of the cellar incident is now given away!) I have seldom met a more conscientious or harder worker. He always had the interests of the Brigade at heart, and I think I am right in saying that he was one of the best, if not the best Staff Captain in France. To Bill Wright, Brigade Transport Officer, the Brigade have to thank him chiefly for two things, one was the sport he showed with his hounds, and the other was for the food that he always managed to bring up just when it was wanted, either in an attack in the trenches or after a long march. He had also a very useful .410 double barrellled gun. Did we not have partridges to eat on the night of 20th—21st March, 1918?

I cannot conclude without thanking Colonel Oates and his Officers for their kindness and for the courtesy they always showed me when I had the honour to have the 2/8th Battalion in my Brigade.

T. W. STANSFELD.

HONOURS and AWARDS

Won by the 2/8th Sherwood Foresters, 1914—1919.

D.S.O.

Rank and Name.

Date of Award.

Lieutenant Colonel W. Coape Oates	January 1st, 1918
Captain A. H. Quibell	January 25th, 1917
Captain J. S. C. Oates, M.C.	4th Army Order, June 1/17

Bar to the Military Cross.

Captain T. S. Elliot	June 3rd, 1918
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Military Cross.

Major M. C. Martyn	January 25th, 1917
Captain R. Staniforth	January 1st, 1918
Captain T. S. Elliot	May 7th, 1918
Captain H. A. Hewitt	January 25th, 1917
Captain C. P. Elliott	October 14th, 1917
Lieutenant G. G. Elliot	December 17th, 1917
2nd Lieutenant R. W. Rounds	December 17th, 1917

O.B.E.

Captain J. D. Dimock	May 30th, 1919
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Bar to the D.C.M.

No. 306206 Sergeant A. E. Walker	4th Army Order, June 1st, 1917
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D.C.M.

No. 306308 R.S.M. J. Lacey	January 25th, 1917
No. 305605 C.S.M. W. H. King	January 25th, 1917
No. 305626 Sergeant Drummer R. M. Cooper	January 25th, 1917
No. 305564 C.S.M. L. G. Stockdale	4th Army Order, June 1st, 1917
No. 306206 Sergeant A. E. Walker	January 25th, 1917
No. 307122 Private S. J. Delight	4th Army Order, June 1st, 1917

Military Medal.

Rank and Name.	Date of Award.
No. 307405 Sergeant J. E. Hamer	4th Army Order, June 1st, 1917
No. 305892 Lce.-Sergeant E. Bilton	4th Army Order, June 1st, 1917
No. 307404 Lce.-Corporal T. W. Brightmore	4th Army Order, June 1st, 1917
No. 307376 Private G. H. Gould	4th Army Order, June 1st, 1917
No. 6088 Private G. Jacques	January 28th, 1918
No. 306188 Private W. Beardsall	January 28th, 1918

Mentioned in Despatches.

Lieutenant Colonel W. Coape Oates (2)	Jan. 25th, 1917 and Nov. 7th, 1917
Captain A. B. Leslie-Melville	April 30th, 1917
Captain A. H. Quibell	January 25th, 1917
Captain T. H. C. Woolley	November 7th, 1917
Captain J. D. Dimock	July 9th, 1919
Captain J. S. C. Oates (2)	Jan. 25th, 1917 and Nov. 7th, 1917
Captain W. N. Wright	May, 1918
Captain C. P. Elliott	November 7th, 1917
Lieutenant H. C. Daffen	January 25th, 1917
No. 2454 C.S.M. H. C. Dixey	January 25th, 1917
No. 306074 C.S.M. F. Farrow	November 7th, 1917
No. 306135 Pioneer Sergeant E. Foulds	Nov. 7th, 1917

The following Notice appeared in the " London Evening Standard " of February 1st, 1918:—

" At yesterday's Buckingham Palace Investiture the King bestowed 190 Naval, Military and Red Cross Decorations. Lieut.-Colonel William Oates, of the Sherwood Foresters (attached to the Royal Sussex Regiment) was among the recipients of the D.S.O., and his son, Major Oates, of the same Regiment, received a similar decoration. His Majesty considerably arranged that father and son should be admitted together and decorated in company."

ROLL OF HONOUR.

2/8th SHERWOOD FORESTERS.

Regtl. No., Rank & Name.	Place.	Date.
Major F. G. Cursham	Aldershot	31. 8.18
Captain B. C. Huntsman	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
Captain T. H. C. Woolley	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
Lieutenant H. C. Daffen	Dublin	26. 4.16
Lieutenant H. C. F. Jeffcock	Templeux	30. 5.17
Lieutenant G. B. Logan	Vendelles	6. 5.17
Lieutenant K. MacKinnon	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
Lieut. (A/Capt.) E. C. P. Moffatt	Templeux	30. 5.17
2nd Lieutenant M. B. Browne	Dublin	26. 4.16
2nd Lieutenant H. A. Hadden	Ypres	26. 9.17
2nd Lieutenant J. M. Jamieson	Hargicourt	28. 4.17
2nd Lieutenant J. G. Roe	Ypres	26. 9.17
2nd Lieutenant A. B. Viner	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
2nd Lieutenant J. L. Warry	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
2nd Lieutenant J. H. Wilson	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
2454 C.S.M. H. C. Dixey	Dublin	26. 4.16
305839 Sergt (A/C.S.M.) T. Catley	Ypres	26. 9.17
306791 Sergt. C. Evans	Ypres	26. 9.17
305824 Sergt. A. Graveney	Havrincourt	7. 6.17
305607 Sergt. W. Heald	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
306222 Sergt. A. Hollis		4.11.18
305161 Sergt. H. W. Widdowson	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
305967 L/Sergt. A. Eyley	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
306700 L/Sergt. T. Gabbitas	Ypres	26. 9.17
306177 L/Sergt. F. Hall	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
305353 L/Sergt. H. Kinnerley	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
306556 L/Sergt. P. F. Shacklock	Ypres	10.10.17
305868 L/Sergt. W. Smith	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
305560 L/Sergt. T. Willoughby		21. 3.18
307185 Cpl. D. Dearing	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
306752 Cpl. S. H. Fewster	Ypres	26. 9.17

Regtl. No., Rank & Name.	Place.	Date.
305763 Cpl. J. W. Knott	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
307502 Cpl. F. H. Morris	Ypres	26. 9.17
306546 Cpl. C. Pike	Hargicourt	28. 4.17
307085 Cpl. H. E. Simpkin	Ypres	26. 9.17
306703 Cpl. J. Stendall	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
306822 Cpl. H. E. Stratton	Ypres	26. 9.17
306255 Cpl. G. Vickers	Cambrai	9.12.17
306698 Cpl. J. W. Welbourn	Ypres	26. 9.17
305875 Cpl. C. Young	Lens	31.10.17
307294 L/Cpl. W. Addicott	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
305830 L/Cpl. J. H. Ayto		19. 6.17
2793 L/Cpl. G. Barks	Dublin	26. 4.16
3078 L/Cpl. W. C. Barrett	Vendelles	31. 3.17
305729 L/Cpl. R. Beighton	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
307360 L/Cpl. S. J. Bembridge	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
306983 L/Cpl. E. Borrill	Ypres	26. 9.17
305586 L/Cpl. T. Bullock	Ypres	26. 9.17
3493 L/Cpl. T. H. Chapman	Dublin	27. 4.16
305613 L/Cpl. J. Cope	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
306787 L/Cpl. A. D. Daft	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
306809 L/Cpl. J. Doncaster	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
306280 L/Cpl. S. Harrison	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
306740 L/Cpl. F. Marchant	Ypres	26. 9.17
307342 L/Cpl. P. Merrix	Ypres	26. 9.17
307092 L/Cpl. R. Reed	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
306547 L/Cpl. W. Robinson	Ypres	26. 9.17
306733 L/Cpl. A. F. Tatlow	Templeux	31. 5.17
306764 L/Cpl. W. Wellard	Ypres	26. 9.17
307315 Pte. G. W. G. Allbut	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
204373 Pte. G. Allcock	Cambrai	18.12.17
204371 Pte. W. H. Allsop	Ypres	26. 9.17
306719 Pte. T. W. Andrews	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
306008 Pte. E. H. Asling	Robecq	9. 5.18
307335 Pte. T. Aston	Hargicourt	29. 4.17
307370 Pte. P. Bacon	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
307231 Pte. H. R. Ball	Havrincourt	8. 7.17
306200 Pte. C. Barker	Ypres	26. 9.17
4628 Pte. G. W. Barnett	Dublin	27. 4.16

Regtl. No., Rank & Name.	Place.	Date.
307168 Pte. G. W. Batchelor	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
307129 Pte. W. Beavis	Ypres	1.10.17
306709 Pte. J. C. Belton	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
307345 Pte. H. Betts	Le Verguier	12. 4.17
307017 Pte. R. P. Boutland	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
5966 Pte. W. C. Brabant	Vendelles	31. 3.17
307341 Pte. A. Brazier	Ypres	26. 9.17
4573 Pte. R. Brindley	Dublin	29. 4.16
306328 Pte. W. Brooks	Ypres	26. 9.17
306838 Pte. G. R. Brooks	Ypres	26. 9.17
305841 Pte. W. Brown	Ypres	26. 9.17
306253 Pte. A. Brown	Havrincourt	25. 6.17
307352 Pte. E. A. Budd	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
307327 Pte. W. J. Bullock	Cambrai	18.12.17
306326 Pte. C. O. Buxton	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
306871 Pte. E. W. Carter	Ypres	26. 9.17
306813 Pte. H. Cartlidge	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
306521 Pte. W. Catley	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
306319 Pte. R. Caunt	Hargicourt	5. 5.17
2863 Pte. J. W. Charlesworth	Killaloe	16. 5.16
306174 Pte. S. E. Clarke	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
307279 Pte. P. Clavey	Ypres	26. 9.17
306150 Pte. R. Combes	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
305765 Pte. G. Corbett	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
306858 Pte. F. Cook	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
307236 Pte. T. J. Cox	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
306870 Pte. E. R. Cranmer	Le Verguier	13. 4.17
307257 Pte. C. H. Cripps	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
203838 Pte. J. D. Crowston	Ypres	26. 9.17
3067 Pte. E. Davenport	Dublin	28. 5.16
306991 Pte. A. M. Day	Hargicourt	29. 4.17
307212 Pte. E. F. Dennis	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
307189 Pte. J. W. Dixon	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
306515 Pte. W. H. Dunn	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
306163 Pte. F. Dutton	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
307317 Pte. F. Ede		7. 5.17
307004 Pte. W. Elliott	Ypres	26. 9.17
307250 Pte. J. W. Endersby	Hargicourt	5. 5.17
306683 Pte. A. E. Faulkner	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
307233 Pte. C. Finden	Ypres	26. 9.17

Regtl. No., Rank & Name.	Place.	Date.
3434 Pte. J. R. Forth	Dublin	27. 4.16
307026 Pte. G. Foster	Vraignes	7. 4.17
307000 Pte. L. C. Foster	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
306669 Pte. S. Fowler	Ypres	26. 9.17
307169 Pte. J. F. Fox	Ypres	27. 9.17
307089 Pte. E. Fox	Vraignes	7. 4.17
204405 Pte. S. Frost	Ypres	26. 9.17
307258 Pte. W. E. Fuller	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
306180 Pte. G. T. Getley	Vraignes	2. 4.17
306709 Pte. J. G. Glidewell	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
202651 Pte. E. Greatorex	Ypres	26. 9.17
306726 Pte. C. Green	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
307139 Pte. S. A. Griggs	Ypres	26. 9.17
306999 Pte. F. G. Guy	Hargicourt	28. 4.17
306234 Pte. E. Hammond	Ypres	26. 9.17
307206 Pte. C. D. Hand	Ypres	25. 9.17
307427 Pte. H. Hardy	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
305917 Pte. J. E. Hardy	Ypres	26. 9.17
307176 Pte. H. Harrison	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
71915 Pte. W. H. Harrison	Cambrai	12.12.17
5826 Pte. W. Heavens		10. 3.17
307425 Pte. E. Hickmott		10. 5.17
307306 Pte. F. Hobbs	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
267167 Pte. J. C. Hodges	Ypres	26. 9.17
306213 Pte. J. Hodgkinson	Ypres	26. 9.17
4136 Pte. L. Holland	Dublin	26. 4.16
307285 Pte. H. Holness	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
204355 Pte. W. A. Hughes	Ypres	28. 9.17
307193 Pte. W. Hutchings	Ypres	26. 9.17
307484 Pte. W. Hyman	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
306512 Pte. S. Jackson	Ypres	26. 9.17
307460 Pte. H. W. Johnson	Ypres	26. 9.17
306812 Pte. S. Jordan	Ypres	26. 9.17
307494 Pte. J. J. Kakes	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
241841 Pte. J. Keaton	Ypres	26. 9.17
2855 Pte. A. J. Kitchen	Dublin	26. 4.16
307005 Pte. A. Laver	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
306899 Pte. F. C. Leman	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
307242 Pte. C. E. Low	Ypres	26. 9.17
307207 Pte. V. E. MacDermott	Le Verguier	7. 4.17

Regtl. No., Rank & Name.	Place.	Date.
307252 Pte. F. C. Manuel	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
307385 Pte. W. Marriott	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
307439 Pte. H. Nixon	Ypres	26. 9.17
306507 Pte. V. G. Parkin	Ypres	26. 9.17
204393 Pte. J. A. Patrick	Ypres	26. 9.17
307473 Pte. W. Peel	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
269227 Pte. G. A. Pembleton	Ypres	26. 9.17
307387 Pte. G. Petts	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
306949 Pte. P. N. Pike	Ypres	26. 9.17
307254 Pte. G. C. Pointing	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
305341 Pte. J. W. Poole	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
307011 Pte W. S. Potts	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
305132 Pte. P. C. Pratt	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
306696 Pte. C. T. W. Pratt	Ypres	26. 9.17
306542 Pte. J. G. Radford	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
306993 Pte. H. Ramsdale	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
204628 Pte. E. Riley	Ypres	26. 9.17
306819 Pte. W. Roberts	Hargicourt	4. 5.17
203829 Pte. J. H. Robey	Ypres	26. 9.17
307391 Pte. A. Robinson	Ypres	29. 9.17
307125 Pte. G. A. Roker	Ypres	29. 9.17
3814 Pte. H. Rodgers	Dublin	27. 4.16
307389 Pte. F. Rose	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
306754 Pte. F. J. Selby	Ypres	26. 9.17
306781 Pte. J. Shannon	Havrincourt	7. 6.17
305866 Pte. A. Sharp	Ypres	26. 9.17
306688 Pte. W. Simpson	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
307454 Pte. C. H. Skevington	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
306701 Pte. H. Slater	Ypres	26. 9.17
307183 Pte. A. Smith	Cambrai	9. 1.18
307001 Pte. R. Smith	Ypres	26. 9.17
306137 Pte. G. B. Southerington	Ypres	26. 9.17
328019 Pte. W. A. Spencer	Ypres	26. 9.17
307470 Pte. A. Spencer	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
306796 Pte. J. L. Spencer	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
306682 Pte. J. Sulley	Ypres	26. 9.17
307323 Pte. W. Surrall	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
204353 Pte. P. Swallow	Lens	31.10.17
307585 Pte. W. Swindell	Ypres	26. 9.17
307190 Pte. S. Sylvester	Ypres	26. 9.17

Regtl. No., Rank & Name.	Place.	Date.
306684 Pte. W. Tarr		12. 4.17
307509 Pte. T. Taylor		5. 5.17
307259 Pte. D. Taylor	Vraignes	2. 4.17
306924 Pte. F. Taylor	Ypres	26. 9.17
307286 Pte. J. W. Taylor	Ypres	26. 9.17
305788 Pte. J. Taylor	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
307269 Pte. S. Thomas	Ypres	26. 9.17
307393 Pte. M. Thomas	Ypres	26. 9.17
306532 Pte. F. C. Thomson	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
307394 Pte. G. Thorne	Havrincourt	8. 6.17
307457 Pte. J. H. Thorogood	Ypres	26. 9.17
306839 Pte. E. E. Thorpe	Ypres	26. 9.17
306775 Pte. W. Tissington	Le Verguier	21. 4.17
307437 Pte. G. H. Tombes	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
307008 Pte. V. N. K. Trotman	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
307476 Pte. H. Ulyatt	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
266879 Pte. J. W. Voce	Ypres	26. 9.17
307397 Pte. M. Wain	Hargicourt	29. 4.17
306161 Pte. E. Walsham	Ypres	26. 9.17
307333 Pte. W. Walton	Lens	31.10.17
306966 Pte. W. Ward	Hargicourt	27. 4.17
306881 Pte. A. S. Ward	Le Verguier	7. 4.17
4643 Pte. A. Warner	Dublin	27. 4.16
306779 Pte. B. J. Webster	Ypres	26. 9.17
204382 Pte. H. Welch	Ypres	26. 9.17
306947 Pte. H. R. West	Ypres	26. 9.17
307154 Pte. F. F. Whyman	Hargicourt	2. 5.17
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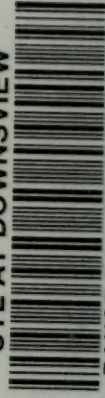
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